

Black Mountain College

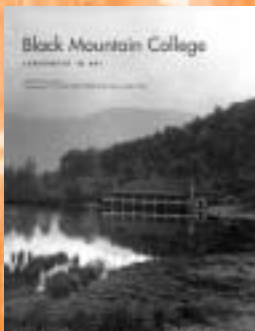
MUSEUM

+

ARTS CENTER



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Black Mountain College: Una Aventura Americana

by Vincent Katz

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid

28 October 2002 - 13 January 2003

When Juan Manuel Bonet, the Director of the Reina Sofia, asked me if I would like to curate an exhibition on Black Mountain College, I said yes right away. I was well aware of the significance of the Black Mountain poets, and at least of two of them, Robert Creeley and John Wieners, major figures in post-war American literature, were among my personal favorites. I saw it as an opportunity to delve further into writers such as Robert Duncan and Charles Olson, whose work I knew but, due to their vast productivity, wanted to know better. I also knew that Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline (again, towering figures and personal predilections) had taught at Black Mountain. Then there were the early paintings of Rauschenberg and Twombly. Both, amazingly, painted some of their best work while still students at Black Mountain.

What I learned is that there is a single thread that connects all the disparate strands of Black Mountain experience, that that thread was woven by the college's founders, who determined the faculty and students, not a governing board, would

continued on page 2



FROM LEFT CLOCKWISE: Exhibition catalogue *Black Mountain College: Experiment in Art*. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain. Jonathan Williams, *Portrait of the Artist (Robert Creeley) as a Spanish Assassin*, 1954, gelatin silver print, 9 x 9 inches, BMCMAC Collection. Hazel Larsen Archer, *Quiet House Doors*, 1948, gelatin silver print, 9.5 x 6.625 inches, BMCMAC Collection.





Black Mountain College: Una Aventura Americana

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make all decisions regarding teaching at the college, in particular that learning should be a communal experience, shared by student and teacher, not a product delivered from teacher to student.

It is always particularly gratifying to me to work with living artists, as I believe that art criticism and curating should be done in service of artists, and that service can best be appreciated by the artists themselves. I am proud to say that the work of 23 vitally active artists is included in the exhibition, along with that of 42 others. There are over 300 pieces, including painting, sculpture, drawing, prints, weavings, jewelry, photographs, video, books, manuscripts, posters, flyers, and letters. There are many breathtaking moments in the exhibition. Perhaps one can serve for all: Nicholas Cernovitch's rare color footage, shot at Black Mountain, of Katherine Litz dancing. We were not sure if that footage could be located, let alone arrive in time for the exhibition, but as with so many institutions and private lenders, not to mention the artists, Cernovitch was generous with this material, which is personal as well as historical. Every exhibition is a collaboration, and this one was embodied by a vast phalanx of those passionate about the subject.

The opening was exciting, especially for the presence of Gus Falk, Elizabeth Jennerjahn, Pete Jennerjahn, Basil King, Martha King, Lu Lubroth, Gregory Masurovsky, and Marianne Preger-Simon. Lu lives in Madrid and Greg in Paris. The others came from the U.S.A.! The book accompanying the exhibition will be out in January from MIT Press. It contains essays by Martin Brody, Robert Creeley, Kevin Power, and myself. I hope you will get a chance to read it.

I would like to thank the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center for their support of the exhibition. The loans they made were very special and provided key elements to the Black Mountain story, as it was told in Madrid. I am sure it will be told many times again.

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ABOVE: Xanti Schwinsky, *Untitled*, ca. 1960, lithograph, 9 x 68 inches. BELOW: Joseph Fiore, *Large Collage*, 1953, paper on cardboard, 18.25 x 23.875 inches. Both works BMCMAC Collection.

To order:

**Black Mountain College:
Experiment in Art**

Edited by Vincent Katz

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470 illustrations,

235 in color, \$75

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Davidson College Honors BMC Alumnus Joe Fiore with an Exhibition

Works from the BMCMAC Collection

To underscore the regional importance of the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, Davidson's Van Every/Smith Galleries will mount the exhibition *Joe Fiore: Works from the Collection of the Black Mountain College Museum*, on view from January 24 - February 21, 2003. The Galleries are part of Davidson's Katherine and Tom Belk Visual Arts Center. http://www2.davidson.edu/news/cevnts/facil_vac.asp

For more information, please contact Gallery Director Brad Thomas, at 704.894.2519 or brthomas@davidson.edu.

In Memorium

Within the past couple of years some of Black Mountain College's most stalwart alumni have passed away. We salute them and their memory.

Hazel Larsen Archer

Miriam Batchelor

Margaret Cantieni

Francis M. Curley

Fielding Dawson

Ed Dorn

Margaret Dwight

Maude Dabbs Haas

Eva Schlein Jungermann

Jacob Lawrence

Richard Lippold

Bert Morgan

Helen Livingston

Nickerson

John O'Neill

Morris Simon

Peter Stander

Peter Voulkos

John Wieners

Norman Weston

Under the Influence: A Festival Report

by Michael Boughn, poet and festival participant

In 1952, John Cage first staged *Theatre Piece #1* at Black Mountain College featuring work by David Tudor, Merce Cunningham, M.C. Richards, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cage himself - putting in motion ideas that led to the development of Happenings beginning in the late 50s. From September 19-22, all of Asheville, NC, and much of the surrounding area became the site of a 50th anniversary celebration of this historic event. Over the 4 days of *Under the Influence*, Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center organized multiple performances of music, art, film, and poetry, all of the work tracing its roots back to the innovations of Black Mountain College.

Much of the focus of the festival was on music, and especially on Cage's legacy. The two main performances, both equally marvelous, were by Tony Conrad and Pauline Oliveros on consecutive evenings at UNCA. Conrad, using a violin, played one note working behind a screen, and Oliveros improvised on an amplified accordion. On Thursday night in a downtown Asheville gallery, Vincent Wrenn used a machine he invented to play the music of the spheres using a computer-driven sound generating matrix keyed to planetary positions and interacting with the body of dancer Yoko Myoi. On Saturday, singer Elisa Faires performed Cage's *Aria for Voice* in Vincent's Ear bar. It was a stunning performance in which the operatically trained vocalist sang, played a coffee grinder, a laptop, and tap danced on a piece of sheet metal. Other performances included the Western Carolina University Gamelan Ensemble playing Cage and Lou Harrison pieces, Chris Hamilton performing Radio Music, and a piece by David Dawson.

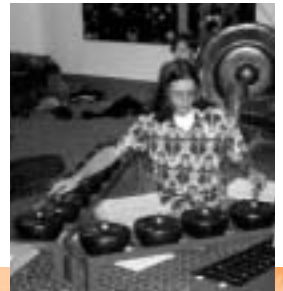
UNDER THE INFLUENCE

There were also a number of tributes to New York Correspondance School founder Ray Johnson, including a display of mail art from the BMCMAC archives and the premier screening of *How to Draw a Bunny*, a controversial documentary exploring the enigmatic death and life of the BMC graduate. On Friday, Negativland presented a number of culture-jamming videos. And on Saturday and Sunday poets Patrick Herron, John Landry, Lee Ann Brown, and Beth Brown Al-Rawi, Lisa Jarnot, and Michael Boughn variously read poetry, did string tricks, and sang camp songs and rhymes at a bookstore in Asheville and in the dining hall at Black Mountain College where the Cage piece was originally performed. Many ghosts attended. Numerous other installations, performances, and exhibits contributed to make the festival a remarkable event which invoked over the four days some of the same wildly eclectic and synergistic energies Cage and the other Black Mountaineers unleashed on a needy world. (The full schedule for *Under the Influence* can still be found at www.blackmountain-college.org/festival/.)

FROM TOP: Poet **John Landry** reading at Malaprop's Bookstore. **Western Carolina University Gamelan Ensemble**. The **Ico Pod** being installed in downtown Asheville. **Yoko Myoi** moving to sounds by Vincent Wrenn. **Brenda Coates**, exhibition curator of *The Architecture of Black Mountain College*.



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Under the Influence: Yoko Ono

by Patricia Bailey, BMCMAC board member and associate professor of art



The interactive artwork brought a gathering of Asheville community leaders to remember, mend, and wish for peace.

“This work is about healing. Imagine, keep wishing for world peace while you mend.”

— Yoko Ono

For the Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center’s September Festival, *Under the Influence: Celebrating the Legacy of Black Mountain College*, contemporary artist Yoko Ono dedicated a special version of an earlier work entitled *Mending Peace for the World for Black Mountain College in the Spirit of the 50th Anniversary John Cage Happening Event*. This work was installed throughout the month of September at the Asheville Area Arts Council’s Front Gallery on Biltmore Avenue in downtown Asheville.

In response to September 11 and the subsequent war in Afghanistan, Yoko Ono made a new version of an earlier 1966 work called *Mend Piece*. In addition to Western North Carolina, throughout 2001-02, *Mend Piece for the World* has been, or will be, performed in Barcelona, Berlin, Boston (at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts at Harvard), Brazil, Canada, China, Copenhagen, France, Helsinki, Ireland, Israel, London, and Scotland.

A “Memorial Mending” took place simultaneously in Asheville at the Arts Council and under the Clock Tower in front of the University Center at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee between 8:46 and 10:28 a.m. on the morning of September 11, 2002. The public in Asheville and the campus community at the University were invited to participate by mending broken pottery from around the world which was placed on tables with mending supplies.

Under the Influence: Thanks!!!

BMCMAC thanks the following organizations and individuals who have given financial and in-kind support to our recent programs: American Institute of Architects (Asheville Chapter), Anonymous Donor, Asheville Area Arts Council, Asheville Art Museum, Asheville Contemporary Dance Theater, Eric Baden, Bonesteel Films, The Big Idea, Black Box Studio, Black Mountain Artspace Charter School, Black Mountain Center for the Arts, Buncombe Community School East, Camp Rockmont, Brenda Coates, Daniels Graphics, European Graduate School, Fine Arts Theater, The Friends of Mountain History,

Hart Distributing, Jon Jicha Design, Malaprops Bookstore, Mountain Xpress, NC Arts Council, NC Dept. of Cultural Resources, The Reader’s Corner, Semi Public: A Space for Contemporary Art, Susan Rhew Design, Table of the Elements, Lynne Santy Tanner, UNCA Cultural and Special Events Committee, UNCA Mass Communication and Music Depts., Vincent’s Ear, Warren Wilson College, Western Carolina University Art, English, Music and Philosophy Depts., Western Carolina University Women’s Center, and Gretchen Westphal. We also thank the MANY volunteers who have helped in countless ways, particularly in overcoming the enormous challenges associated with *Under the Influence* our multi-media, multi-location festival in September. And finally, a big thank you to the poets, musicians, artists, dancers, filmmakers, and educators who have fallen under the influence of Black Mountain College and shared their bounty with us.



Lake Eden from Dining Hall. David McConville (festival organizer and BMCMAC board member) and Marie Tavrogas Stilkind (BMC alumnus) with a Ray Johnson-inspired pancake bunny head.

Soon To Appear: “Black Mountain Days” by Michael Rumaker

by Mary Holden Thompson, BMCMAC founder and board member

Black Mountain Press, an imprint of the BMC Museum and Arts Center will soon publish a major new book, *Black Mountain Days*, a memoir by former student Michael Rumaker. This 544 page-turner takes you from Rumaker’s working-class origins through his student days during the College’s final four tumultuous years. Those days comprised for Rumaker a period of intense creative and personal discovery.

Rumaker’s delightful account of his misadventures offers a unique insider’s glimpse of BMC from 1952-56 and sketches personalities like Robert Creeley, John Chamberlain, Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Jonathan Williams, Wes Huss, and looming above all others his mentor and avowed father-figure, Charles Olson. Devotedly portrayed by Rumaker, the gargantuan Olson is invoked as a great teacher and a marvelous monster of modernist originality. Rumaker’s essential memoir is as enlightening as it is engrossing.

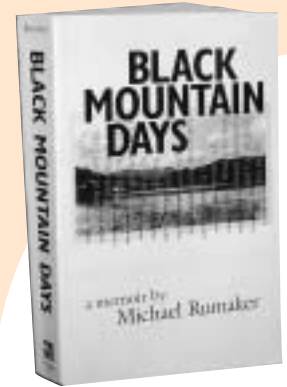
Available September 2003 through your local bookstore and through the BMC Museum and Arts Center. Price \$25.

Pre-Publication Comments

“This book is terrific. The reader feels that he/she is there, living through Black Mountain’s endless difficulties (and equally endless epiphanies) in the most intimate way. (It’s like one of those exhaustive, amazing dreams you get if you take melatonin to help you sleep.) I love the sentence: ‘Even the commonplace at Black Mountain was not without risk.’ Rumaker has compiled a wonderful chronicle, the book to put next to Martin Duberman’s *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community*.” — Jonathan Williams

“Michael Rumaker’s finely detailed, evocative memoir puts personal flesh on BMC’s historical bones. He brings to life the daily texture of what it meant to live in that remarkable community.” — Martin Duberman

“Michael Rumaker’s *Black Mountain Days* joins with the late Fielding Dawson’s *The Black Mountain Book* to provide an increasingly articulate record of ‘those happy few’ who were its persons in the closing years of the college. The poet and rector Charles Olson makes an ample and defining pivot for the meld of stories here told — of persons in displacing crisis, of elders confounded with responsibility and poverty, of the all too indifferent world surrounding this fragile company in perhaps the most decisive experiment ever to be attempted in the history of American educational enterprise.” — Robert Creeley



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Excerpt from *Black Mountain Days*

“Hard as Charles’ fury was, his verbal slaps that afternoon awakened me into a second birth, for they marked the beginning of my writing life. That lacerating day commenced my leaving the coma of the amniotic sac of an unborn self I - not my mother alone, not my father alone - had up until that moment encased myself in. It was Charles who broke through that self-imposed protective fluidity of unconsciousness I had tried to drown myself in out of fear and timidity, taking comfort in comfits, the uncontested sweet waters of the overly familiar, his voice, again, the same as thunder that raises drowned bodies. It was his - I can put it in no other way - beneficent fury that freed me into the world, a second spiritual ‘mother’ and, in time, a second and most important spiritual ‘father.’ ”



ABOVE: Book design by Jon Jicha.
RIGHT: Michael Rumaker, c. 1957,
photograph by Jonathan Williams.



Gifts to the BMCMAC Collection

by Alice Sebrell, BMCMAC program coordinator

During the past two years Black Mountain College alumni have made some extraordinary donations to our permanent collection ranging from photographs, correspondence, and memorabilia to paintings and sculpture. One of the most prized additions is a painted directional sign associated with the Lake Eden BMC campus.

One of the looms from the BMC Weaving Studio was donated by Elma Johnson, and three benches from the Quiet House are on loan from Camp Rockmont. Our dream is to someday have a facility where these things can be seen and appreciated on a regular basis.

Several alumni have donated packets of letters they sent home from Black Mountain College and also letters to and from fellow Black Mountaineers after college. Ati Gropius Johansen donated letters (in German!) to and from her parents as did Alma Stone Williams who was Black Mountain College's first African-American student (summer 1944). Jesse Green donated some wonderful correspondence with M.C. Richards, and Leo Krikorian sent letters and photographs taken before, during and after BMC. Jane Mayhall sent excerpts from Betty Brett's journal dating back to 1940 and 1941. We are pleased that all of this material is being safely stored now and that it will be available to researchers in the future.

We have been given some amazing artwork recently including: one of Ruth Asawa's woven wire sculptures, a steel sculpture by Neil Noland, paintings by Basil King and Leo Krikorian, prints by Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, Jacob Lawrence and Xanti Schawinsky, ceramics by M.C. Richards and Peter Voulkos, copies of Ray Johnson's mailart, some Albers memorabilia and negatives of drawings that Ati Gropius Johansen made in Josef Albers' drawing class. Nick Cernovitch donated two copies of "The Song of the Border-Guard," a broadside of Robert Duncan's poem designed by Cy Twombly and printed by Nick at BMC. We've also received new publications from Basil and Martha King, Michael Rumaker, and Hannelore Hahn.

If anyone you know has any Black Mountain College material that needs to be protected, or if you are interested in donating artwork to the BMCMAC Collection please call 828.299.9306 or e-mail bmc-mac@bellsouth.net. We are a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization; there can be positive tax benefits for donations of value.

Congratulations

. . . to Mary Holden Thompson, Founding Director of BMCMAC and Dr. James Thompson III on the birth of their son Adam.

. . . to BMC alumnus, poet, publisher, and photographer Jonathan Williams on the recent publication of his book *A Palpable Elysium: Portraits of Genius and Solitude*. An exquisite mix of photographic portraits and accompanying text creates highly memorable and entertaining reminiscences of remarkable people he has known. 176 page book published by David R. Godine.

BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE



FROM TOP CLOCKWISE:

Neil Noland, *Untitled*, 1991, steel, 19 x 80.5 x 16 inches. Gift of the Artist.

Jacob Lawrence, *Windows*, 79/100, 1977, lithograph, 17.75 x 22 inches. Gift of Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence in memory of the Artist.

Ruth Asawa, *Untitled*, 1954, black and brown iron wire, 81 x 8 x 8 inches. Gift of Lorna Halper.

Black Mountain College sign. Gift of Lorna Halper.

All works are gifts to the BMCMAC Collection.

We Need You!

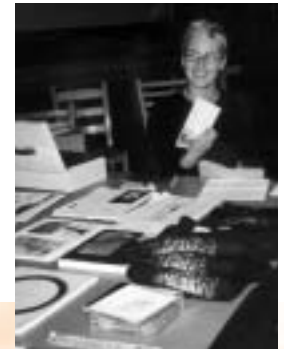
The spirit, legacy, and ongoing influence of Black Mountain College have been celebrated this year locally, regionally, and internationally from Lake Eden to Madrid. Our collection has been significantly enriched by recent gifts, and we will publish another major book about Black Mountain in the coming year. We have expanded our historical focus by celebrating those still finding contemporary inspiration from the Black Mountain ideals. We need the financial assistance of everyone who believes in the importance of Black Mountain College for this organization to grow. The many visitors who make a pilgrimage to Western North Carolina to find the mythic Black Mountain College need an actual destination where they can learn more about the amazing college and its remarkable alumni. Just imagine what we could do with a space of our own for exhibitions,

performances, educational programs, and a library of books and films for research.

Membership in BMCMAC is the first level of support to continue to make this community of ideas and events an ongoing reality. Join us today in this worthy enterprise; we cannot do it alone. Consider a gift of membership to someone who is interested in Black Mountain or a tribute gift in memory of a like-minded friend or relative.

BMCMAC is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, so your donation is tax-deductible. Now is the time to make a donation or bequest to BMCMAC and help to celebrate the legacy! Please clip out the form below and send it with your check to:

BMCMAC
P.O. Box 18912
Asheville, NC 28814



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FROM TOP: **Micah Pulleyn** (BMCMAC board member). **Claude Stoller + Hope Greer Eisenman** (BMC alumni) on a return visit to Lee Hall and BMC's first campus, Blue Ridge Assembly.

Black Mountain College MUSEUM + ARTS CENTER

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Amount Enclosed

Make checks to BMCMAC. Memberships are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

BMC Alumni Return to North Carolina

by Connie Bostic, BMCMAC board chair

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BACK ROW FROM LEFT:
Leslie Paul Symington
Alma Stone Williams
FRONT ROW FROM LEFT:
Nick Cernovitch
Dorothea Rockburne
Susan Weil
Marie Tavroges Stilkind

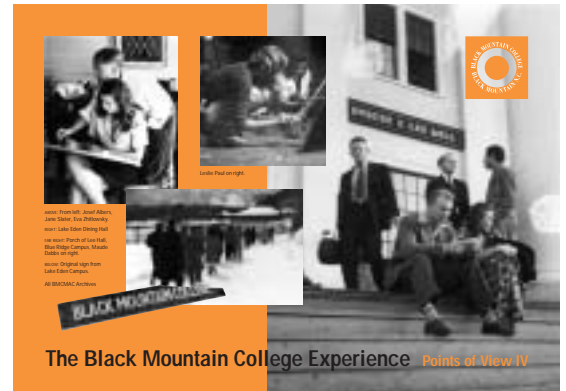
Six Black Mountain College alumni traveled from various parts of the U.S. and Canada in April, 2002 to participate in *The Black Mountain College Experience: Points of View IV*. The participating alumni were: theater lighting designer Nick Cernovitch, painter Dorothea Rockburne, editor Marie Tavroges Stilkind, actress and art researcher Leslie Paul Symington, artist Susan Weil, and humanities professor Alma Stone Williams.

The weekend provided an opportunity for BMCMAC to record six new oral history interviews, reflecting points of view based on very different experiences of the school. The weekend also featured a tour of the Lake Eden Campus graciously led by BMC alum Nick Cernovitch and Jon Brooks, one of the current owners of the property. There was a screening of Monty Diamond's

film *Black Mountain College: A Thumbnail Sketch* and a lively panel discussion with the alumni held in the Lake Eden Dining Hall.

The large audience for the panel discussion included North Carolina Secretary of Cultural Resources Libba Evans and several representatives from the Western Office of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History. Sponsors of the Black Mountain College Oral History Project include the North Carolina Dept. of Cultural Resources, North Carolina Arts Council, Asheville Area Arts Council, The Friends of Mountain History, Lynne Santy Tanner, and Camp Rockmont for Boys.

Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center is a volunteer-run, non-profit organization established in 1993 to increase awareness of the students and teachers of Black Mountain College and of its educational process.



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