

Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory

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Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory

Topher Lineberry

In summer 2018 I began documenting, archiving, researching, and writing about the artwork of Helen Gaines Howerton Lineberry (1919-2012), who also happened to be my grandmother. Helen was born and raised in Asheville, North Carolina where she lived until 1955, briefly interrupted by college studies in Greensboro, NC, and New York, NY. Helen lived and made art in Asheville *next to* Black Mountain College during the height of its powers, but no evidence suggests she was ever *part* of it.

While this paper is not directly about Helen, her legacy inspired a larger questioning of positions historically and geographically *adjacent*, *simultaneous* to, and *crossed-over* with Black Mountain College and its memory. Adjacency, simultaneity, and overlap remain vital for thinking through the mechanisms which eclipse the work and lives of artists, people, communities, and stories like Helen Lineberry and those surrounding Black Mountain College. In particular, the field of Appalachian Studies has yet to adequately absorb the possibilities from this kind of inquiry by fully embracing Black Mountain College as an “Appalachian school.” Concurrently, the fields of art history and visual studies at least *appear* subject to familiar traps and delusions of siloed metropolitan genius regarding Black Mountain College. If Black Mountain College remains one of the few enduring membership cards for western North Carolina and Appalachia into the American vanguard of visual art, then I demand a thorough reevaluation of context and geography in its admission to the club. Outside the institutional community of the school, invoking the local context of Black Mountain College may re-tempt discursive categorical shortcuts in art history such as “outsider art,” “visionary art,” “folk art,” and certain ideations of craft so often grafted onto regional visual histories of the Mountain South.

What I propose is a continuation of issues compatible with Lynne Cooke’s term *outliers*: positions, works, and narratives not yet understood (or proactively misunderstood) by a suspicious artworld apparatus. Cooke’s 2018 *Outliers* exhibition and catalog lay out a space between “outsider” and its adjacent realms with cultures of

COMMITTEES NAMED FOR COLLEGE SUPPER PARTY

Committees were announced yesterday for a supper party to be given Wednesday by members of the sophomore class of St. Genevieve-of-the-Pines as a courtesy to members of the freshman class. The party will be held at 4:30 o'clock at the Little Flower camp.

Miss Barbara Vaughn has been named chairman of the refreshment committee and assisting her will be Miss Lola Freeman, Miss Tressie Mae Nollner, Miss Margaret Swicegood, and Miss Bernice Wollstein. Miss Mary Hawkins is chairman of the decorations committee aided by Miss Mary Martha Bennett, Miss Peggy Douglas, Miss Helen Howerton, Miss Helen Coleman and Miss Sylvia Plow.

The entertainment committee will be composed of Miss Jean Baumberger, chairman, Miss Theresa Schackles, Miss Pansy Burleson, Miss Mary Alice McSween and Miss Virginia Higgenbotham.

Members of the academy student body will entertain with a party Friday night and members of the younger grades will have a party Friday afternoon at the school.

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BLACK MOUNTAIN WOMAN'S CLUB TO MEET WEDNESDAY

BLACK MOUNTAIN, Oct. 25. (Special)—Mrs. William A. Hamilton of Grovemont will be hostess for the meeting of the Black Mountain Woman's club Wednesday afternoon at 3:30 o'clock at her home.

A program has been arranged during which Miss Lucy Morgan and Mrs. Ford, of the Penland Weavers and Potters will exhibit some of their works and give talks on them.

Mrs. Anni Albers, of the Black Mountain college, will also exhibit some of her artistic tapestry and weaving work and give a talk on the art. Mrs. Albers is known throughout this country and Europe for her art in tapestry and weaving.

Mrs. L. C. Murrow, of Asheville, district art chairman for the state Federation of Women's clubs, will speak on "Art". Miss Elizabeth Hoyt, dramatic instructor at the Montreat Normal school, will also participate in the program. All members and friends of the club have been invited to attend the meeting.

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Figure 1: Asheville Citizen-Times, October 26, 1937, provided courtesy of the Swannanoa Valley Museum.

This image features two announcements: one is for an event at now-defunct local college, St. Genevieve-of-the-Pines, listing Helen Howerton (later Helen Lineberry) as one of the participants; the second is for the Black Mountain Woman's Club featuring a talk by Anni Albers with other local groups like Penland and Montreat Normal School. While the announcement of Albers lends to under-recognized acknowledgement of BMC members participating in local inter-institutional dialogue, I believe the form of the separate articles themselves encapsulates the position of adjacency described in attempting to locate an art history for Helen Lineberry and many others (who also likely never made it into a newspaper in the first place).

the avant-garde, the latter from which Modern and contemporary art have - predominantly fed.¹ I remind readers that “outsider” and other categories (despite their persistent usefulness in many circumstances) say more about the agents and institutions as “insiders” defining them than they necessarily do about the subjects in question. Cooke recalibrates American Modernism, particularly between “the schooled and unschooled” as precedent for institutional rubrics allowing who and how artists and artworks are circulated for exhibitions, collections, writings, and histories.

The terrain I attempt to locate is a set of concerns which are actively *outlying* for contemporary art, art history, visual and critical studies, and Appalachian Studies in grappling with Black Mountain College as a dynamic legacy. Many of the issues I raise are not directly related to art, either, but outly the study of it by way of Black Mountain College as an Appalachian liberal arts institution long known and celebrated for its artistic patrimony. To the extent that Black Mountain College was a porous entity I intend to refocus on its pores.

In spring 2018 Appalachian State University’s College of Arts and Sciences celebrated a “Black Mountain College Semester” (BMCS) resulting in a profusion of workshops, programs, and exhibitions. ASU dedicated a double issue of its *Appalachian Journal* to the ongoing impacts of BMC, which attempted to suture local context back into shared memory. With particular note of the writing in *Appalachian Journal* (referenced throughout this paper), re-collecting and digesting the output of this semester feels crucial, particularly in the following aims from App State’s website:

BMCS seeks to bring the story of Black Mountain College into conversation with the story of Appalachia, particularly that of western North Carolina, to better appreciate the role of “place” in the history of the college. Whereas Black Mountain College is considered a site of innovation in America between 1933 and 1957, the surrounding Appalachian Mountains have often been characterized as culturally backward and static during the same period. However, Appalachia was more than a backdrop of intellectual productivity at Black Mountain; it was also a complex space of social, economic, and environmental transformation.²

After reviewing the wealth of content, research, and information released from Appalachian State's BMC Semester, one sentiment captured many of the initiative's energies. Regarding BMC, Sandra L. Ballard states:

It continues to be revered and studied, but not by many in the interdisciplinary field of Appalachian Studies. I've always wondered why. Here was a remarkable, innovative educational experiment set in the mountains of North Carolina, contemporary with other nearby pioneering institutions such as John C. Campbell Folk School...the Penland School...and the Highlander Folk School...They all continue to flourish -and exist- but not Black Mountain College, except in the warm coals of imagination that artists and scholars still fan and gather around for inspiration.³

Ballard provides astute and widely-felt sentiments of confusion—and perhaps melancholy—about BMC in a gestalt understanding of Appalachian Studies. She continues, “The local connection between the College and western North Carolina continues to be largely missing from the BMC narrative, as does ‘place’ and ‘geography.’” To note an idea echoed in multiple writings, “some might say Black Mountain College was *in* Appalachia but not *of* it. (original emphasis) But that is a road that runs both ways—and deserves exploration.”⁴

Writings by Joseph Bathanti,⁵ Martha R Severens,⁶ Garry Barker,⁷ and David Whisnant,⁸ among others, emphasize separation, distance, or disdain between the institutional community of BMC and their neighbors. Attempting to complicate this one-dimensional narrative, Anne Chesky Smith curated a project at the Swannanoa Valley Museum in concert with App State's BMCS titled *Black Mountain College and Black Mountain, North Carolina: Where 'Town' Meets 'Gown.'* Chesky Smith's exhibition provided well-needed groundwork to re-think how those in cultural, historical, and other academic, professional, and community fields continue to ponder and build on the legacy of Black Mountain College.



Black Mountain College & Black Mountain, North Carolina: When "Town Meets Gown"

Anne Chesky Smith, Executive Director
Swannanoa Valley Museum & History Center, Black Mountain, North Carolina

INTRODUCTION

A myth that has long persisted in the lore of Black Mountain College, an experimental liberal arts college that operated in the mountains of western North Carolina from 1933-1957, is that the school, which attracted and created a number of famous artists from around the globe, was isolated from the local community. However, interviews and other primary documentation from former students, faculty, and local residents reveal that there was far more influence and interaction between the college and the local community than previously thought.

ABOUT BLACK MOUNTAIN



Originally known as Grey Eagle, the town – located about 15 miles east of Asheville – changed its name when officially chartered in 1893 to match the name given to the new railroad station – Black Mountain. Though already a destination for tourists seeking refuge from the heat and insects further south, the arrival of the railroad shifted the town's economy to focus more on tourism (and extractive industries like timbering).

In the 1930s, Black Mountain was changing. Industrialization was on the rise, and agriculture was declining; rural residents were moving into cities; federal programs were putting people back to work while improving infrastructure; and African Americans continued to face structural racism.

Why Black Mountain, North Carolina?

More opportunistic than deliberate, founder John Andrew Rice chose Black Mountain because the campus at YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly – the college's first home – was "Perfect. Here was peace. Here was also central heating against the cold of winter, blankets, sheets, dishes, flatware, enough for a dozen colleges, all at a moderate rental."

ABOUT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE



In existence for 24 years (1933 – 1957), Black Mountain College was meant to be fundamentally different from other colleges operating at the time. Students and faculty lived, worked, and studied side-by-side, governing themselves and embracing change. Arts were central to education as was experiential learning. This educational model attracted and created independent-minded people, many who would have a tremendous influence on American literature, visual and performing arts, and education.

Notable Faculty

John Andrew Rice, Josef and Anni Albers, M.C. Richards, Charles Olson, Hazel Larsen Archer, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Creeley, Max Dehn, Willem & Elaine de Kooning, Walter Gropius, Buckminster Fuller, Jacob Lawrence, Franz Kline, and Robert Motherwell

Well-Known Students

Suzi Galtik, Francine du Plessis Gray, Kenneth Noland, Arthur Penn, Robert Rauschenberg, Donoghue Rockburne, O'Y Twombly, Susan Weil, and Jonathan Williams

THE TOWN IN THE COLLEGE

"The summer of 1944 was crucial to my whole subsequent existence. Impacts like being in the South with Jim Crow, chain gangs, bootleg moonshine, that incredible mix of sophisticated Europeans gathered in the amazing 'island' of creativity and cross-pollination in the heart of hillbilly redneck country – are all part of it."

– Ruth Lyford Souder, student 1944

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Local staff and other town residents were often consulted by the college to offer advice on everything from the best hiking trails and crops to plant to their thoughts on integration and where to house African Americans visiting the campus.

The Land

Frank Rice and I decided to take a hike to the top of a mountain called Craggy Dome, directions to which had been given to us by a local farmer named (Dawson) Allen, one of the 31 people in the initial college community. It was an experience, especially for a city dweller, to venture into such a rugged unknown. Near the place where the trail ran into the road, we were halted by two men, one with a warden's badge on. We thought we were in trouble because all through the woods "No Trespassing" signs were posted. But instead of the heavy hand of the law descending upon us – the gods be praised! – they offered us food and conviviality.

– Doughnut Cramer, student 1933–37

The mountains of western North Carolina featured prominently in many student accounts of their time at the college. Local college staff with extensive historic knowledge of the topography, culture, and flora and fauna would take students on guided hikes and camping trips. Students and faculty would walk the mountains and valleys for recreation and inspiration.

Similarly, students and faculty also consulted locals in their efforts to build their own buildings and grow and raise their own food. Local contractors and farmers proved to be a wealth of knowledge that enabled the success of the college's work program.

THE COLLEGE IN THE TOWN

"We didn't know what they were, but they were hippie before the word was invented. We heard lots of talk about them but we just thought they were mighty strange. There wasn't a name for them – just say Black Mountain College was enough."

– Sally Puck Thomas, local resident

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Despite some fear of these unknown and "strange" entities that inhabited the college, many locals embraced the opportunities for additional – and unique – arts exposure provided by the college.

Beyond opening up the campus to the public for tours and performances by students, faculty, and visiting artists, the school also brought arts to the community – producing children's plays, participating in exhibits, teaching art at local secondary schools, and producing a weekly radio program.



When people from the surrounding area came to the college they were asked to abide by campus desegregation. However, the BMC community respected segregation while in town.

"I got two young ladies from Black Mountain College, who came and taught art [for me at Black Mountain Grammar School]. They were real nice, real pleasant. And they got the kids to dabble-dabble and it gave me a chance to rest a bit."

– Rev. Eugene Byrd, local teacher

Students hosted a radio program on local station WUNC from 1938 until at least 1943, which reached residents across the area.

"GENUINE CROSSOVER"

"People would come from Asheville and from the towns around to witness these events. After my performance that night some stranger came up to me and in a western Carolina accent said 'I don't know what you were doing up there but I was with you all the way.' I took this as a great compliment. We all seemed like creatures from some other world to the local people; equally, they seemed the same to us. Our relations were strained, but occasionally there would be some genuine crossover."

– Andy Olson, student 1948-50; apprentice teacher 1951

CONCLUSION

Students and faculty shopped in town, frequented local restaurants and bars, and hiked with local guides. For many, the western North Carolina landscape, people, and culture became central to how they experienced the college. Often, coming to BMC was their first experience with undeveloped wilderness, Southern Appalachian culture, and Jim Crow laws. Being immersed in a place so starkly different from their hometowns often colored their worldview long after they left – for some perhaps more so than even their time on campus. And some made their home in the area long after the college closed its doors.

As for the town, locals still remember the school, its students and faculty, and many of the ideas they introduced.

REFERENCES

Quotations from students are taken from Melvin Lane's anthology, *Black Mountain College, Sprouted Seeds: An Anthology of Personal Accounts, 1991*. Quotations from local residents are taken from oral histories archived at the Swannanoa Valley Museum & History Center in Black Mountain. The quotes from John Andrew Rice and Dr. Percy H. Baker came from Martin Duberman's book, *Black Mountain: An Experiment in Education, 1972*. The list of notable faculty and well-known students was put together by the Black Mountain College Museum + Art Center in Asheville. The map is courtesy of the NC Geographic Survey with Black Mountain marked by the author. All newspaper articles were clipped from newspapers by the author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne Chesky Smith has served as the Executive Director of the Swannanoa Valley Museum & History Center in Black Mountain, NC, since 2011. During this time she has authored or co-authored several articles and four books on local history, including one book on Black Mountain College. Anne worked at Camp Rockmont for Boys, located on Black Mountain College's former Lake Eden campus, for 15 summers. This poster was created based on an exhibit curated by the author in 2018 for the Swannanoa Valley Museum & History Center in Black Mountain.



Figure 2: Poster created by Anne Chesky Smith for the Swannanoa Valley Museum's exhibition, *Black Mountain College and Black Mountain, North Carolina: Where 'Town' Meets 'Gown.'* Shown at the Appalachian Studies Association Conference for Concurrent Session 6 March 12-15, 2020, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Reproduced with permission from Anne Chesky Smith. [\[View full size.\]](#)

This pondering and building requires more focused cultivation of local context quickly pushed aside for starry-eyed ruminations on the artistic and literary genius of a select few, as is typical of art history and the worship of exclusive avant-garde practices. Thinkers like Ross Hair have reevaluated BMC legacies like those of poet Jonathan Williams through liminal terms like "Avant-Folk."⁹ In art history and criticism, Darby English notes that modernist avant-garde practices thrive by exclusion of "outsider" and

other seemingly populist cultures, but not necessarily in isolation.¹⁰ And so art history, visual studies, and related fields may also benefit from deeper consideration of Okwui Enwezor's promotion of art "...produced and mobilized in a field of relations."¹¹ Black Mountain College presaged many of the interdisciplinary directions of contemporary art, snowballing into an "expanded field" by multiple avant-garde trajectories for at least a half century.¹² *But where does Appalachia factor into this genealogy?* Before landing back in the fields of art, revised investigations into the "place" of Black Mountain College might benefit from extensive off-roading.¹³

Appalachia has a long paper trail created through hundreds of years of travel writing—and more recently through popular media like books, television, movies, and films—in which the region's inhabitants are typified, according to Susan E. Keefe, as "unclean, lawless, and degenerate backwood hicks."¹⁴ Originally from the Kentucky mountains, the late renowned feminist scholar and critic bell hooks recounts the development and redeployment of Appalachia as a caricature: "The free thinking and non-conformist behavior encouraged in the backwoods was a threat to imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, hence the need to undermine them by creating the notion that folks who inhabited these spaces were ignorant, stupid, inbred, ungovernable."¹⁵ From a "power over" perspective, containing and sublimating perceived threats to the status quo, as identified by hooks, are the end game of caricatures and stereotypes. They inform many of the falsely unified or universal conceptions of modernity and modernism as they were once understood. What hopefully emerges here is a conception of Appalachia that is caught *between* dominations.

Often viewed as a subset of Area Studies, Appalachian Studies formalized in the 1970s as an interdisciplinary academic field with the goal of understanding Appalachia as a region, which spans thirteen states and 420 counties according to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). Despite ARC's clarity, exact definitions of Appalachia remain subject to debate and interpretation. Appalachian Studies grapples with the complexities of unique mountain cultures through multiple dimensions such as history, literature, anthropology, music, religion, economics, education, environment, folklore and folk customs, labor issues, women's and gender issues, sexuality, ethnicity, race

and racism, health care, community organizing, economic development, coal mining, tourism, art, demography, migration, and urban & rural planning.

Ballard's call to bridge Black Mountain College and Appalachian Studies may suggest a quiet and perhaps tense distance from one another. So much of Black Mountain College is understood through its institutional community (students, staff, and faculty) and the "artworld" (major galleries, museums, academies, press, markets, et al) viewed as sited away from the Mountain South, rather than through the school's neighboring or local communities. Because of this perceived disjuncture, aggregating stories of overlap between institutional and surrounding communities into a "crossover index" is conceivably necessary to some of the more concrete understandings, next steps, and outcomes for coalescing Appalachian Studies with the legacy of BMC. In kinship with Chesky Smith's *Where Town Meets Gown* project, such a crossover index would become a working catalogue of BMC's interactions and encounters between institutional members with those of local and neighboring communities.

Because most (but not all) of these stories of crossover are told from the position of BMC students and faculty, this lop-sided arrangement of perspective presents the opportunity to build out projects that "flip" or "invert" *back toward the so-called local*, leading to a more cumulative-yet-decentered understanding of Black Mountain College within past and present-day communities. It is in this outlying crossover site where "difference" is produced—rather than static ideations of difference itself—that the slippery understanding of "Appalachian culture" might find more truthful relations to BMC.

For example, BMC co-founder Bob Wunsch was reportedly arrested on a sodomy "crime against nature" charge after he was caught with a local marine. However, from a perspectival flip *back into the local*, we may start to ask basic overshadowed questions such as: *who was this local marine?* Surely evidence about the incident for both Wunsch and the marine lives in local documents like police records, mug shots, or court minute dockets. The two were reported to have been caught in Wunsch's car, but where might they have met? Rumors have circulated that the marine may have worked undercover but is any evidence available now to support or deny this?

There are archival approaches to better understand a wide swath of local perspectives, whether or not they are pinpointed to exact stories told by BMC students, faculty, and staff e.g. *What scholarship, research, records or evidence exist of local pre-Stonewall cruising in Buncombe County? How might Bob Wunsch and the local marine compare or cross-reference with other “crime against nature” charges from the area during the same time?* Chapters of BMC’s “sexual liberation” (and repression) sustain fascination for many—myself included—but what did this mean for the local worlds immediately beyond the Lake Eden and Blue Ridge Assembly compounds?¹⁶ More comprehensive queer sexual ecologies of western North Carolina and the Mountain South deserve fair scruples in their potential interlacing or disconnection with Black Mountain College.¹⁷ Most importantly, though, what projects *in the present* might be produced in response to this research and reframing?

Evidence and anecdotes of the BMC community “overlapping” with neighboring realities continue to reemerge despite stated philosophies and potentials of interaction between institutional community and community-at-large, which mostly appear confined to unrealized programming. Psychologist John Wallen understood BMC as somewhat at odds with direct service to the surrounding people and communities.¹⁸ Before ultimately resigning from the BMC faculty, Wallen wished to conduct a seminar on rural sociology, trying to “interpret our desire to be of help in any way that we could” to the neighboring area.¹⁹ Other members of BMC’s institutional community felt jealousy, betrayal, or conflict in Wallen’s proposal, perceiving a shift in allegiance to a particular reality, as if presenting an ultimatum between “inside” and “outside” the institution.²⁰ This perceived fragmentation of reality founds part of what Enwezor calls “classical modernity,” in which false distinctions and tensions—particularly those informing conceptions of the avant-garde (BMC) and the seemingly outmoded (local rural communities)—embellish discourse and ideology for “competition and hegemony often found in the spaces of art and culture.”²¹

In addition to crossover, many questions of *adjacency* mark underdeveloped scholarly and artistic sectors, particularly where Black Mountain College is concerned within an informal constellation of progressive education in the region. The region’s folk schools²²—particularly Penland, Highlander, and Campbell—exceeded mere proximity.

They shared many of “the core principles of John Andrew Rice’s educational experiment before [BMC] came into being.”²³ Black Mountain College and nearby folk schools were also informed by European cultural pathways, Bauhaus through BMC—becoming a safe haven for many Jewish emigrés fleeing ascending German authoritarianism—and the Danish *folkeskole* model through the Mountain South—grassroots responses to regional state neglect of education and other fundamental resources. Both the folk schools and BMC “emphasized intellectual creativity and hands-on learning; neither used grades to evaluate student work...” They both also “...used local materials and sources of inspiration, which was a philosophical and practical choice during the Great Depression in particular... and practiced what is now called “sustainability” through on-site agricultural production and exchanges with local social and economic networks.”²⁴ Aside from sprinkled mentions, essays, and writings, scholarly and artistic deficiencies persist in examining the relationship of Black Mountain College to other progressive institutions, particularly the nearby folk schools in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee.

The praise for “radical democratic” practices monopolized by Black Mountain College might find a particular counterpoint in Highlander Folk School. Two BMC students recall after visiting Highlander in eastern Tennessee they found the community “more ideologically satisfying” than Black Mountain.²⁵ Highlander was founded on the belief that active participation in community affairs “would prevent the school from becoming ‘a detached colony or utopian venture.’”²⁶ Black Mountain College apparently modeled democracy through an out and proud “cosmopolitan” philosophy advertised by the school and later extolled by decorated curator Helen Molesworth.²⁷ On the other hand, Highlander pursued social engagement with local communities in order to “educate rural and industrial leaders for a new social order.”²⁸ As a result, Highlander became a major engine of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement among other championed causes and organizing efforts. Highlander went on to host and train household names like John Lewis, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr. During its time Black Mountain College’s cultural geography was uniformly and pejoratively noted for the dissonance within perceived conservative values attributed to flatly-conceived Christian faith, folkways, and institutions of the mountains.²⁹ Beyond the

mirage of geographic coincidence, what unites Black Mountain College with nearby progressive folk schools is the mixed reuse of predominantly white Protestant infrastructures: sites, buildings, networks, communities, ideas, and individuals of religious and spiritual affiliation with Protestant Christian faith. This “faith by works”, so to speak, was re-tooled by the political landscape and economic crises of the early to mid 20th century.³⁰

The Blue Ridge Assembly Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in Black Mountain proper became the site of Black Mountain College’s first campus.³¹ Prior to becoming Black Mountain College, the Blue Ridge Assembly YMCA served as a rendezvous point for Myles Horton to meet with Don West in 1932 to found Highlander Folk School in Tennessee.³² Highlander Folk School was originally informed by a strain of Christian Socialism adopted by Horton as he sought a more explicit political adoption of the Danish *folkeskole* model in concert with his studies at Union Theological Seminary.³³ Horton’s study and implementation of the Danish model was never meant as a one-to-one reproduction: always conceived with adaptability for the needs of local and surrounding communities as its main priority. Highlander “...survived and achieved some meaningful change because it has consistently maintained both a sensitivity to southern culture and a commitment to transforming it.”³⁴

The son of a Methodist minister, John Andrew Rice was one of BMC’s core founders who sought to redirect his Protestant notions into something more useful or democratic. Suzanne Penuel reflects on such evidence as Rice writes rather clumsily about his white upbringing on a southern plantation and the multitude of racial and class hierarchies he experienced, while never seeing himself as the ultimate beneficiary. Penuel attempts to partially level with Rice, cautiously seeing his secular reclamation of “grace” as shoring up room within the puritanical realm of white Protestant ethics: perforce racialized, gendered, and classed.³⁵ In another cross-wiring both John Rice and Lucy Morgan, founder of Penland School of Craft, lived in Chicago and studied with the acclaimed John Dewey, whose influence and involvement in western North Carolina is usually restricted to BMC.³⁶ In contrast to BMC’s approach to networking, Lucy Morgan’s community “...extended beyond the school and the mountain communities surrounding Penland to include Western North Carolina Diocese of the Episcopal

Church in Asheville, Episcopalian women's groups in several metropolitan areas, and benefactors, big and small across the country."³⁷

A "modernist" in his own way, according to Susan E. Keefe, John C. Campbell founded the John C. Campbell Folk School as a preacher and college president. Campbell carried admittedly stilted philosophies about folks living in the mountains, informed by "civilizing" and condescending missionary perspectives.³⁸

Albeit on different terms, the role of religion and spirituality remains a flashpoint in the legacy of BMC, evidenced in the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center's 2021 collaboration with University of North Carolina at Asheville's (UNCA) inaugural Faith in Arts Institute.³⁹

As Joseph Bathanti similarly observed, ask many people from North Carolina about Black Mountain College and you will likely receive blank stares.⁴⁰ In winter 2019 I gave a lecture about Helen Lineberry's work to an intimate family gathering. None of my family in attendance—college-educated North Carolinians, some even working in creative or artistic fields—had heard of Black Mountain College. Although it is known that Helen often went swimming at a lake in Montreat⁴¹ in Black Mountain proper, a mere 5 miles from BMC's campus. The knowledge, legacy, or significance of Black Mountain College is rarely bestowed upon actual present-day local residents for a number of speculatable reasons. Those who are aware of Black Mountain College have likely been initiated by means other than (or *in addition to*) geography and rarely seem to understand it, as Ballard pointed out, as an "Appalachian school."

These initiated members, as it were, are often hypnotized by the glow of Josef and Anni Albers, Leo Amino, Hazel Larsen Archer, Ruth Asawa, Harrison Begay, John Cage, John Chamberlain, Merce Cunningham, John Dewey, Richard Buckminster Fuller, Ray Johnson, Karen Karnes, Franz Kline, Gwendolyn Knight, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Jacob Lawrence, Robert Motherwell, Elaine "V.V." Rankine, Robert Rauschenberg, Dorothea Rockburne, Kenneth Snelson, Cy Twombly, Cora Kelley Ward, Susan Weil, and Mary Parks Washington, to name just a few from the working BMC "canon." Such an open arrangement of names—which includes a fatigued coterie of usual suspects as well as those whose contributions have been understudied, undervalued, or underrecognized—has been precariously assembled, reassembled,

and debated both because of and despite the mythmaking of large metropolitan art institutions. Truly the work and legacy of these artists and thinkers is an embarrassment of riches for western North Carolina but to whom go the spoils? Inseparable from the BMC story these figures and their work are worth—if not necessary of—celebrating. However, the artworld's shiny legacies and BMC pedestals (some of which haven't even been built yet or remain under construction) can also risk distraction from the historical framing of the school in a holistic cultural-geographic context. If these pedestals, but not necessarily the people, leave the room momentarily we may begin some long-overdue renovations.

BMC's real and local impacts are observable in the institutional, pedagogical, and artistic landscape of WNC today. Warren Wilson College, which was originally the Asheville Farm School, operated in close collaboration with BMC in the 1930s. This local institution was undeniably crucial to advance what is now a legendary feature of BMC's agricultural work-study curricula, where students built and worked on the campus farm. This inter-institutional growth has been laid out by David Silver,⁴² whose own inquiries about BMC I find scholarly and intellectual kinship.⁴³ After ultimately becoming a four-year liberal arts college in 1972 (the same year Martin Duberman's *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* was released), Warren Wilson College re-absorbed many of the values of BMC which it first helped create.

Also in 1972, Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, launched a residential program called Watauga College with many of the same guiding principles as BMC. Maggie McFadden expounded this relationship firsthand in a previous issue of the *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*. McFadden notes Watauga College as part of a broader simultaneous emergence and flirtation with interdisciplinary and experimental pedagogy across the country.⁴⁴

In 1993, Mary Holden founded the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center. Holden's extensive programming remained tightly dedicated to the institutional community and legacies of BMC, including alumni gatherings, exhibitions, performances, workshops, films, poetry readings, and panel discussions, though it appears no physical space for the museum appeared until 2003. Alice Sebrell writes that without a physical space, the museum had "a serious visibility problem" with the

community.⁴⁵ Attempting to redress patriarchal eclipse, a major corrective to the telling of BMC history occurred in 2008 with a year-long focus on women who were part of the institutional community.⁴⁶ The museum's growing collection aids BMC-related exhibitions around the globe. In 2009 BMCM+AC established the annual ReVIEWING conference about BMC at UNCA, and in spring 2010 started the annual {Re}HAPPENING fundraiser at the original Lake Eden campus location in collaboration with another local non-profit, The Media Arts Project.⁴⁷ Venturing a more secure link with local art pedagogies of higher learning, in 2015 the museum established a 5-year renewable agreement to work collaboratively to develop opportunities for students, teachers, researchers, and the general public to engage with BMC's legacy. This Memorandum of Understanding was renewed in 2020 and has resulted in visiting research fellowships, museum internships, and public programs including the 2021 Faith in Arts Institute.⁴⁸ BMCM+AC now has an ACTIVE ARCHIVE program, where contemporary artists produce new work in response to museum collections.⁴⁹ In September 2018, the museum moved physical locations to a larger space in the heart of downtown Asheville.⁵⁰

In 2015, eighteen artists, writers, creatives, and educators gathered at the Lake Eden campus of Black Mountain College to form School of the Alternative.⁵¹ The program runs during the summer as an experimental residency in the spirit (but not as a replication) of Black Mountain College.

Lauded for its critical success and multi-city tour, the exhibition and catalog, *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957*, epitomizes the care of remembering BMC for its more insulated realities and myths, while perpetuating larger neglect in "re-placing" its history. The exhibition's curator Helen Molesworth has done a loving, thoughtful, elaborate job of remembering, recovering, and promoting BMC with an almost surgical precision of *extraction*. In recollecting compulsory facts of BMC in her exhibition catalog, Molesworth referred to the school's location as "...an accident of geography..."⁵² This approach certainly seemed to have made her exhibition more mobile. *Leap Before You Look* toured exclusively in Boston, Los Angeles, and Cleveland, Ohio. For the artworld at large, Molesworth's ambitious project placed BMC back on the radar of cultural insiders and their attendant audiences beyond the Blue

Ridge. The scope of Molesworth's exhibition—which I managed to view at the ICA in Boston—is admittedly jaw-dropping and the catalog manifestly beautiful. Although embedded in a worn mythos of BMC in art history and related fields, Molesworth updated the school's pantheon of giants seen as outsized for the rural Appalachian community, who were nonetheless nurtured and challenged along their journeys into Modern art star circuitry.

As noted by Carey Hedlund in comparing BMC to nearby Penland School of Crafts,

Black Mountain, with its Bauhaus lineage and constant traffic to and from mid-century, avant-garde New York City, had an intellectual electricity fed by outside.⁵³

The memory of BMC as it relates to this “outside” metropolitan current lives at odds with many conceptions of Appalachia; this affiliation might encourage stewards and scholars of the school's legacy to pause and more carefully strategize the recurring use and reanimation of the college's semi-residual incorporation into the artworld-at-large.

Theater and performance scholar Arnold Aronson rightfully credits Black Mountain College as birthplace to a bevy of avant-gardism, but tells a familiar tale compatible with the perspective of Molesworth: “Far from the cultural centers of the United States, it served as an oasis where artists, musicians, dancers, writers, and theatre practitioners could work untrammelled by the pressures and constant scrutiny of galleries, critics, and commercial demands.”⁵⁴ In chorus with other contradictions that arise when reconciling BMC with its geography, the opposition of a mountain “oasis” versus a metropolitan “cultural center” haunts the logic of place that continues to erase a much more complex and lively view beyond static objects or a frozen set of relations. Aronson's framing of Appalachia as an oasis invokes the image of Southern mountains as an exotic destination from a longer tradition of tourism dating back to at least the 19th century. Many of these travel writings helped to engrain the cultural, social, and political hierarchies of U.S. regionalism, particularly in cementing stereotypes about mountain folks as backwards and uneducated.

Travel writing in particular has been a tool for domination the world over, Appalachia included. However, 19th century writers like Rebecca Harding Davis—who wrote about the Mountain South—have been noted by contemporary scholar Melanie Scriptunas for presenting “...a journalistic, third person narrative who subtly incorporates the viewpoints of the region’s inhabitants to a larger national narrative.”⁵⁵ I wonder what might be produced in similarly advocating for western North Carolina within national and international narratives about Black Mountain College.

Challenges in regional perspective live in theories of Appalachian Studies which define the far-reaching area—particularly the Mountain South—in relation to extractive “outside” or absentee forces. According to scholar Wilma A. Dunaway, this geographic economic arrangement of power was entrenched since late colonial settlement, Indigenous land appropriation, and dispossession throughout so-called Appalachia.⁵⁶ In Appalachian Studies’ nascent stages in the 1970s, scholars expressed this overarching extractive economic arrangement, albeit in questionable terms. Indeed, we have only recently dealt with the last hurrah (hopefully) of Appalachian Studies’ own bugaboo: “internal colonialism.” Popularized in Helen Matthew Lewis’ 1978 edited volume of essays by multiple authors, “Colonialism in Modern America: The Appalachian Case,” internal colonialism in Appalachia theorizes the region primarily through economics of absentee land ownership. This relationship contributes to exploitations of land, labor, and resources, resulting in the ongoing divestiture of peoples, cultures, and geographies.

In other words, a set of extractive and subjugating economic industries (coal mining, mountaintop removal, timber, real estate, tourism, etc.) generated mostly from “outside” the region positions Appalachia as a “colony” inside the U.S., primarily in service of the insatiable metropole. From 1978 to 1981, a survey conducted by the Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force found that absentee ownership accounted for at least a staggering 51% of land in the Southern Appalachian mountains of Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.⁵⁷

One immediate criticism of internal colonialism was the uniform conception of the region: a dreaded “essentialism” which plagued many emerging social and political discourses of the 1960s and 1970s. This theory, though, also neglects previous and

ongoing settler colonial occupation of stolen Indigenous land. Scholar Stephen Pearson elaborates on how ideas like “internal colonialism” have facilitated a sense of indigeneity primarily for white settlers of Appalachia.⁵⁸ This framing of white settlers as the region’s rightful “natives” has also been perpetuated in many discourses of regional craft and folk practices.⁵⁹ Internal colonialism has inaccurately—in its best (and perhaps naive) light, *incompletely*—conceived and named forms of social, political, economic, and geographic impoverishment and neglect which are nonetheless real and violent.

For Black Mountain College, revisiting the relations to the land on both campuses past, present, and future literally grounds revisitation of the school and recalibrates the possible meanings which continue to link Appalachia with colonialism. Both former campuses of Black Mountain College sit on stolen *Tsalagi* (Cherokee) land settled by violations of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which established Appalachia as a *literal* colonial borderland after the 7 Years War.

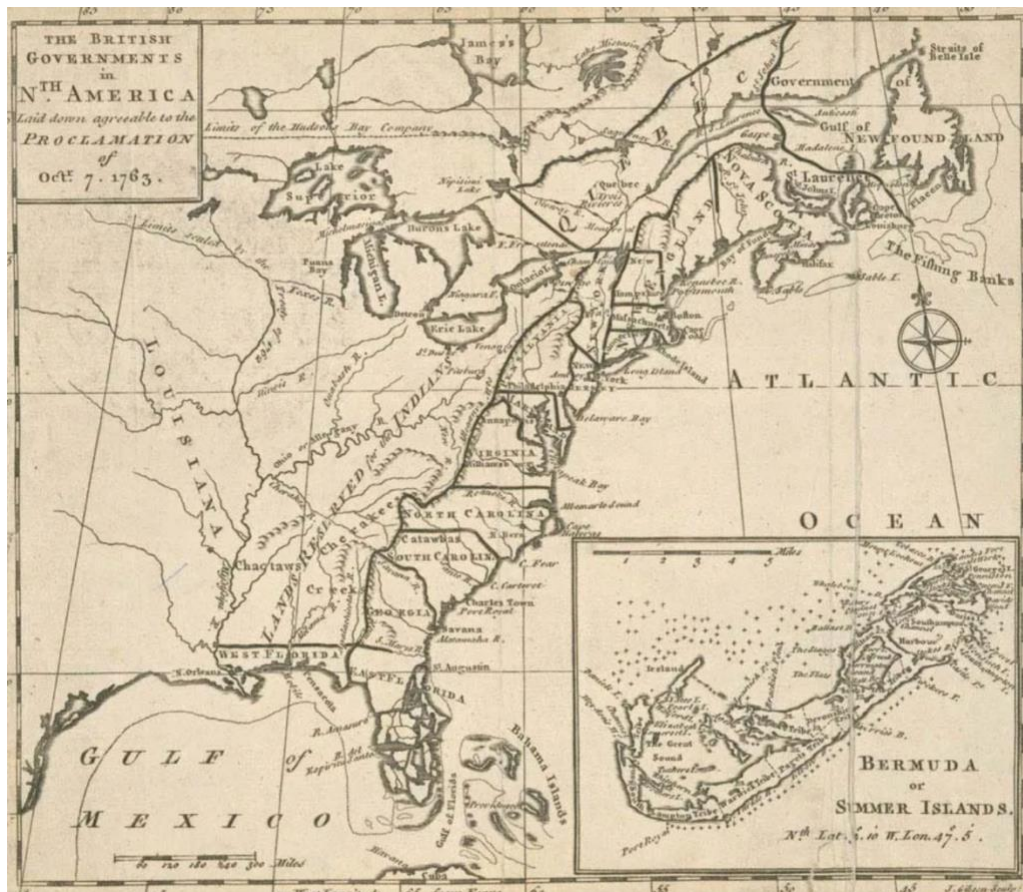


Figure 3: *Proclamation of 1763*, Image, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Proclamation-of-1763#/media/1/536603/210287>, accessed March 14, 2022.

Such violations were wrongfully and violently authorized in so-called Buncombe County and surrounding areas through subsequent treaties in 1777, 1785, 1791, and 1798: all of which form just a small part of the genocide, ethnocide, and forced displacement in what is for-now western North Carolina.

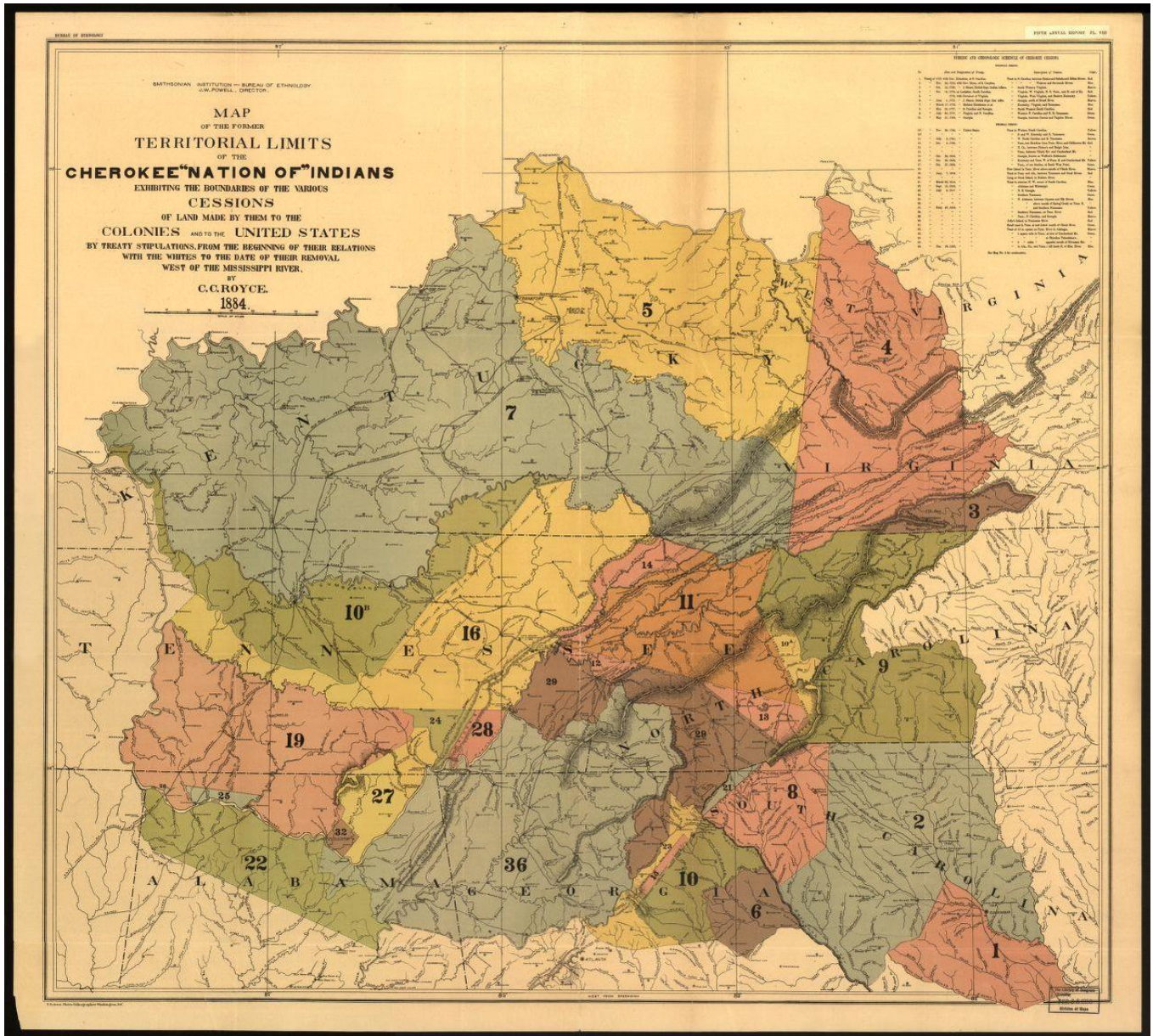


Figure 4.1: Royce, C. C. Map of the former territorial limits of the Cherokee "Nation of" Indians ; Map showing the territory originally assigned Cherokee "Nation of" Indians. [S.I., 1884]

Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/99446145/>.



Figure 4.2: Detail of Figure 4.1 showing territories on which Black Mountain College would later occupy.

The 1830 Indian Removal Act and 1838 Trail of Tears specifically mark western North Carolina in a direct line of devastation, betrayal, and loss for Cherokee people, land, culture, and sovereignty. Just as important is the fact that Indigenous *survance*⁶⁰ is also presenced today by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) along the Qualla Boundary, a mere hour and fifteen minute drive from the former site of Black Mountain College.

In looking at the history of Black Mountain College during its operation, another *simultaneous* development of creative production often remains eclipsed along the Qualla Boundary. Simultaneous to Black Mountain College were significant developments of local Indigenous arts, crafts, and creative production in Appalachia. In the 1930s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provided support to craftspeople of the EBCI for a community development project.⁶¹ By 1946, this project grew to become the long-standing co-operative of Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Incorporated.⁶² The ability to

show, sell, or otherwise distribute this work changed dramatically upon the post-war expansion of the highway system, part of broader shifts in mountain modernity.⁶³ In the copious waters of “craft discourse” related to Black Mountain College there remains a drought of acknowledgment for the EBCI in the school’s various retellings. In Black Mountain College’s encounters with Native culture and exchange in the school’s legendary trips to Mexico, a curious but unsurprising omission persists, even in describing a seeming *non-relation* to the Eastern Band so close by.

The Native histories of BMC’s Lake Eden campus became an obsession of former BMC English teacher, David Corkran, who would later go on to train in Native American history, but whose own conclusions about the land⁶⁴ would likely benefit from knowledge and interception by Indigenous leaders, scholars, artists, and activists. In addition to “sustainable” agricultural practices and artistic applications of abundant natural surroundings, cultivations of the land and its resources were vital to BMC during its tenure such as extraction directly on campus grounds, which temporarily became a muscovite mine during World War II.⁶⁵ The relationship of BMC and the BMC Museum + Arts Center and School of the Alternative to ongoing settler colonial relations remains vital for reexamined programming and the application of their respective missions. The Museum of the Cherokee Indian and The Asheville Art Museum have recently built bridges with contemporary practices of EBCI members in the 2021 exhibition, “A Living Language: Cherokee Syllabary and Contemporary Art.”⁶⁶

Dance and performance scholar Arabella Stanger dedicated an entire chapter of her recent book, *Dancing on Violent Ground*, to reformulating the social and “democratic” meanings of famed dancer and choreographer, Merce Cunningham. Stanger argues that Cunningham’s work was specifically developed at Black Mountain College in service of what Saidiya Hartman calls “white ideality.”⁶⁷ Stanger bridges a great deal of my own concerns by redressing the culture and mythos of Black Mountain College through its context in Jim Crow segregation⁶⁸ (revisited later) as well as how de-indigenization was key to the school’s Dewey-inspired democratic culture and philosophy: honed by an insistence on individuals within society. Stanger interprets that

...by building its pedagogy similarly around individuals' self-realization through living simply on land thought as 'remote,' Black Mountain College materialized a form of settler worldmaking.⁶⁹

In her endnotes, Stanger acknowledges Black Mountain College within the cultural, social, and political ecologies of Appalachia but does not elaborate on them. Regardless, Stanger points to the absencing of Indigenous peoples and sovereignty in Black Mountain College's experimental inertia, where the "remoteness" she describes also carries implications for cultures of regional domination and hierarchy within the larger U.S. settler state. As a population defined by Pearson primarily as "landless settlers," the disenfranchisement of white Appalachian mountain communities within the strata of U.S. nation-building extends the vast structure of settler colonialism. Alyosha Goldstein suggests that this settler colonialism is sometimes remade to "symbolically renegotiate inequalities among white people."⁷⁰ As colonialism is sometimes considered a midwife to capitalism,⁷¹ class, poverty, and unequal access to resources partially redeploy—but *specifically do not equate or commensurate*—similar strategies of displacement and subjugation against Native peoples. Different realities are co-produced from the same apparatus.

Stanger continues her critique of Black Mountain College, explicating from the school's advertising which promoted idyllic vistas of the campus, as the "...fabrication of the North Carolina landscape into an environment for the fashioning of self-directed individuals freed from establishment dictates..."⁷² Somehow the majestic mountain landscape was just "waiting" for Black Mountain College's experimental avant-garde community, whose vision of democracy rested on their untrammelled individual will within an intentional settler community. Stanger continues to describe a contradictory binding through the violent perceived absence of indigeneity from the landscape as precisely what enables its potential.⁷³ Such a contradiction, Stanger concludes, informs the perception of Black Mountain College's location as a "geographic 'elsewhere.'"⁷⁴

This de-indigenized perception of geography and landscape sit within a bigger tradition of settler narratives which position Appalachia as it is currently understood, arguably part of the very basis for Appalachian Studies as an academic field. Stanger posits that Black Mountain College was "...a practice of land whose worldmaking is

dependent on the *unmaking of worlds* preceding the settler institution's arrival."⁷⁵ (emphasis added) As an inadequate gesture towards re-presencing indigeneity at Black Mountain College, *Diné* (Navajo) painter, printmaker, and illustrator Harrison Begay (*Haashké yah Níyá*) is one of the few known Native community members at the school. Begay attended on a scholarship for architecture through the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1940 to 1941.⁷⁶

For clarity, this recognition of Indigenous land does not result in absolution of land theft and settler appropriation. Questions for the future legacy of Black Mountain College emerge from current movements like LANDBACK, which seek to return lands to rightful stewardship and expanded restorations of Indigenous sovereignty.⁷⁷ *As one of many possible developments: What might it look like for a museum like BMCM+AC or other partners to commission works by Indigenous artists and scholars which envision the former campuses of BMC for a decolonized future? Beyond exercising vision, would institutions like BMCM+AC—donors, boards, sponsors, mission statements, recent land trust, and all—have the courage to support material repatriation of lands upon which its own legacy is built, should such a call take hold and mount?*

Art historians such as Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips,⁷⁸ among others, have helped shift narratives of Indigenous art within global Modernisms. Furthering attempts to reframe Modernism from its well-worn path of white Eurocentric and colonial pathways, recuperation of Black Modernisms have also gained traction through the work of curators such as, but specifically not limited to, Lowery Stokes Sims,⁷⁹ Denise Murrell,⁸⁰ and Adrienne L. Childs,⁸¹ and problematized by critics like, but not limited to, bell hooks⁸² and Michele Wallace.⁸³ Fast and loose, *modernity* describes the situation or conditions of a modernizing world. *Modernism* describes the cultural and ideological responses to modernity. One such striking feature of these and other stories from Black Mountain College is its relation to the macroscale South under what historian and theorist Sarah Haley calls "Jim Crow modernity."

According to Haley, modernity was never a uniform geographic development or precise historical epoch, but a disputed and byzantine process "...linked to an imagined social and political future."⁸⁴ Haley elaborates from this premise that modernity "...was characterized by the cultural, economic, and social formation constituted by the

experience of living amidst rapid change or discontinuity, shifting class relations brought about by the transition from agrarian to industrial economies, and the attendant ruptures or fragmentations of identity that these shifts produced.”⁸⁵ Haley’s broad view of modernity provides a valuable on-ramp to the work of Susan E. Keefe who positions Appalachia within “multiple modernities.”

Keefe enumerates conditions of the Mountain South in which industrialization in the late nineteenth century modernized the region through railroad expansion, resource extractions like coal and timber for easterly coastal areas, and later textile factories,⁸⁶ which were assisted with other developments like highways in the 20th century by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).⁸⁷ With such a bewildering conglomeration of invasive, exploitative, disruptive, and at times promising developments, Sarah Haley asserts modernity is partially elaborated by the agitations between autonomy and fragmentation.⁸⁸ Haley directly applies these agitations to the Jim Crow South, “...where black political organizing, white women’s increased independence, black migration, and labor conflict challenged assertions of absolute white collective autonomy.”⁸⁹ All of these developments played out in some way at Black Mountain College.

Keefe’s identification of modernizing Appalachian forces such as railroads and coal contain more crossover with BMC narratives. These realities are featured in stories by BMC’s institutional community, which consistently and necessarily relied on railroads and other emerging mountain infrastructure like roads and highways. In another example, BMC students recount witnessing prisoners work on a chain gang, often on “carefree hikes.”⁹⁰

Sarah Haley bestows insight into the convict lease and chain gang systems as a highly orchestrated state spectacle, which “...combined public terror and discipline in a modern technique of southern punishment.”⁹¹ As key to modernity under Jim Crow, the Good Roads movement in North Carolina accelerated use of convict labor in chain gangs, which were made up of overwhelmingly Black prisoners, and whose criminalization is well-documented to result from highly arbitrary facile charges and circumstances. Black Mountain College’s reliance on the convict-constructed Western North Carolina Railroad in Asheville extended from rail systems originally built by the

stolen labor of enslaved persons.⁹² From these railroads Black Mountain College students would often haul coal back to campus.⁹³

The proximity of BMC to conspicuous forces of Southern Appalachian discipline and punishment are also seen where students went looking for the library in the segregated town of Black Mountain proper, only to discover its erratic hours and its standing above the town jailhouse.⁹⁴ The role of visibility as part of the Jim Crow apartheid regime is further understood through BMC student Zoya Slive, a German emigré who fled fascism in Europe only to be publicly shamed for using the “colored” water fountain in a local department store.⁹⁵ Many other notable stories have been told from the perspective of white BMC members crossing the color line, and remain another site of inquiry prime for revisitation and re-framing.⁹⁶ In terms of vision in the progressive pedagogies of BMC, one wonders how the act of “seeing” the conditions of anti-Black state oppression apprehends visual cultures of a predominantly—explicitly not entirely—white avant-garde community like Black Mountain College.

Jim Crow modernity, however, asserted itself more directly at Black Mountain College. The school’s institutional community faced heated debates over its stance on racial segregation. BMC is credited as one of the first colleges in the American South to racially integrate in 1944 after consulting Rubye Lipsey⁹⁷—who worked in the BMC kitchen with her husband, Jack—and famed anthropologist and folklorist, Zora Neale Hurston,⁹⁸ among others on the matter. BMC admitted Alma Stone Williams as the school’s first—but not last—Black student. Reinforced by Williams’ own account, the story of BMC’s Black student body often begins and ends with her.⁹⁹ There is a lack of central comprehensive documentation or scholarly transmission about Black students who attended BMC. Outside of the school’s own community, music teacher Roland Hayes briefly but notably integrated the general public on campus during a legendary concert in 1945.

In addition to consolidating the school’s epoch of racial integration from a bevy of well-known BMC sources, independent scholar Micah Wilford Wilkins has braced useful preliminary information about other Black students in attendance such as Sylvesta “Vesta” Martin, Mary Parks Washington, Ora Marie Williams, Jeanne Belcher, Louise C. Cole, Louis H. Selders, Delores Fullman, Luther Porter Jackson Jr, Doris Harris Miller,

Quentin Kyles Miller, as among those currently known and named.¹⁰⁰ It has also been noted that despite a dearth of knowledge about Black students and their experiences, BMC eventually failed to attract or retain Black enrollment.¹⁰¹ Another compounded shortfall regards focused comprehensive documentation or scholarly transmission of the networks and relationships created between Black Mountain College and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), despite evidence that such networks existed with institutions such as—but likely not limited to—Virginia State College, Fisk University, Spelman College, and LeMoyne College.

While captive BMC audiences rediscover the brilliance and contributions of Black teachers at the school, Jacob Lawrence,¹⁰² Gwendolyn Knight,¹⁰³ Mark Oakland Fax, Roland Hayes, Carol Brice, to name a few, scholarship and projects of a dynamic and multidimensional view of Blackness at Black Mountain College has been unquestionably eclipsed by structural racism and white supremacy in the larger artworld, academic fields, local institutions, and the region of western North Carolina itself.

As one of many possible developments: can institutions like BMCM+AC or other partners commission more Black scholars, researchers, activists, and artists to further illuminate the realities—and importantly the ways out—of Jim Crow modernity at Black Mountain College? What would it look like to build on that work, perhaps commissioning work by living students and alum artists from HBCUs as responses to this expanded field of research? As one point of success, Marie T. Cochran—founder of the Affrilachian Artist Project—has been a resident curator for BMCM+AC's ACTIVE ARCHIVE program. Cochran curated an exhibition at the museum called *adVANCE: Modernism, Black Liberation + Black Mountain College* that opened February 11, 2022.¹⁰⁴

Terms to visibilize Black creative production in the Appalachian region have been noted in developments like the term *Affrilachian*, originally coined in the 1990s by Kentucky-based poet, Frank X. Walker¹⁰⁵ and adopted by many. The overwhelmingly lily complexion of Black Mountain College research—myself included—is also reflected in the field of Appalachian Studies. The growing field of Black Appalachian Studies has arguably been active since the Black Appalachian Commission in 1969.¹⁰⁶ On a special podcast episode of *Black in Appalachia* Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin and William Isom II co-

hosted and interviewed Dr. Wilburn Hayden, Dr. Karida J. Brown, and Jillean McCommons about their experiences of attending the Appalachian Studies Association Conference, each providing a unique perspective.¹⁰⁷ The 2021 Appalachian Studies Association conference sought to center anti-racism, though Jillean McCommons noted that such a focus continued an orientation toward white learning rather than fostering Black spaces and autonomy. The episode ends with a clip of the late Elandria Williams presenting at a previous conference, invoking Appalachian Studies' eternal return to internal colonialism, "we cannot talk about Appalachia being colonized when the same people colonized the place."¹⁰⁸

Internal colonialism in Appalachia has been critiqued and rehashed since its inception, but at a 2016 Appalachian Studies Association conference, roundtable facilitators Barbara Ellen Smith and Steve Fisher urged scholars to find new modes of solidarity. They rightfully held on to one of the most galvanizing sentiments from a now fraught and hopefully retired idea, stating:

As citizens of the most powerful nation-state in the world who are also residents of one of its most impoverished regions, we in Appalachia occupy a contradictory location with potential for our own potent critiques, insurgencies, and "occupations"...we are not exceptional in the dilemmas we face. More importantly, we are not alone.¹⁰⁹

I ask how stewards of Black Mountain College's legacy might lay bare a solidarity within Appalachia's own dilemmas, which continue an uneasy alignment discursively and materially across multiple axes of "difference."¹¹⁰ Smith's grounding in her calls to action and solidarity strike a similar cord with Margret Kentgens-Craig's understanding of Black Mountain College in its founding and geography:

Why choose a remote location such as Black Mountain? The start-up of a most progressive and financially uncertain school in one of the poorest and least economically developed regions in the state seems paradoxical.¹¹¹

The seeming incompatibility of poverty, financial uncertainty, real and perceived lack of modernization, alongside the cultivation of progressive institutions are precisely where a

potent critique may emerge. The falsehood of BMC in a terrestrial vacuum—Aronson’s “oasis” or Stanger’s more critical “geographic elsewhere”—remains. BMC was certainly unique but in many ways it was not exceptional. Perhaps Black Mountain College perfectly embodies the contradictions that Appalachian Studies itself has trouble reconciling in a heterogeneous dynamic regional self-conception. A larger sentiment about Appalachia regarding BMC lives in what is for me a visceral paradox about continuing to produce and reinterpret the memory of Black Mountain College in, around, and for its original locale: *how do we keep making and reasserting a presence out of absence? What does it mean that the memory, and not the school itself, continue to drive local cultural production of its legacy? Exactly how and what are we conjuring from Black Mountain College in this ongoing institutional séance?*

I was struck by lead archivist Heather South’s earnest and personal reporting about the Western Regional Archives (WRA)—the archive of western North Carolina—and its activity surrounding Black Mountain College. As a legacy, history, memory, mythology, the evidence and traces of Black Mountain College produce what I believe to be an atomic industry of intellectual, artistic, and scholarly tourism. South reports that during the WRA’s first five years of operation, “...we’ve hosted more than 4,000 people in our search room and answered more than 8,000 requests from 41 states and 20 countries, the majority of which were researching Black Mountain College.”¹¹² As with the recent success of *Leap Before you Look*, BMC exhibitions have also emerged in Spain, England, Germany, New Mexico, and New York reported by the BMC Museum + Arts Center.

On a macro scale the relationship of BMC to New York City and other centers of an international cosmopolitan artworld, it may at least *appear* that Black Mountain College as a site, location, or geography in western North Carolina has fallen prey to a web of absentee forces of the cultural elite. It may also *appear* that these forces have in part cannibalized the memory of BMC and spit it back out into various institutions to re-consume in a perpetual cycle of selective “gee whizz” commentary. However, resting solely or uniformly on these real and present antagonisms feeds directly back into the trappings of internal colonialism and the essentialisms of ‘60s and ‘70s modernization theories. The scale shift back to the micro and mezzo (regional, state, mountain ridge,

county, town, tribe, community, institution, etc.) may acknowledge disparate arrangement and resource distribution while focusing on literally rewriting the script of BMC from the ground-up. As another contradiction, this demand takes additional resources, many likely to come from “outside” agents and institutions.

In a conversation with Cora Fisher titled “Regionalism Versus Provincialism: Agitating Against Critical Neglect in Art World Peripheries,” Amy Zion promoted interrogation away from “...the false, binary relationship between center and periphery (or local vs. global)...”¹¹³ Zion discourages the falsehood of center and periphery because it endorses the global artworld as a singular region of distinct cultural histories. The untruth distinguishing local and global culminates in the overlapping of said histories, risking homogeneity upon contact. Zion encourages, questions, and challenges us:

Can we cultivate multiple regions and acknowledge the differences between them, including the unequal access to various resources, without setting them within this kind of oppositional relationship? There is as much violence in ‘saming’ as there is in ‘othering.’¹¹⁴

Pointing back to the proposed “crossover index”, examining the active process of heterogeneity at a granular level aims to build out a platform to local voices and histories, from which to further integrate into a network of community development as well as the arts and humanities. A crossover index provides the opportunity to re-frame what might otherwise *appear* as an oppositional bond and complicate—not homogenize—the relational scales between Black Mountain College and its multiplied geographies and experiences.

Phillip J. Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney’s essay *The Uses and Misuses of Appalachian Culture* may help us think about Black Mountain College as it re-enters the field of local place-based examination, perhaps in practice falling under the purview of Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, or a broader consortium of institutions, much like those for Appalachian State’s BMC Semester. Obermiller and Maloney’s unique adumbration about un-fixing Appalachia as a static object from “the amber of culture”¹¹⁵ got me thinking about the particularity of community arts-based engagement

(which they heartily endorse), specifically around how BMC might be traced, recorded, and imagined more thoroughly through the lens of local community members.

Future projects and programs which promote archival research, field work, myriad interventions, creative responses, social practices, re-positioned community events, and other reorganizing visions in the local *present* may help to remedy gulfs of public awareness surrounding the significance (or even the very existence) of Black Mountain College. From stories of BMC in relation to crossover, adjacency, and simultaneity, a process hopefully emerges for consciously opening up space for local communities and agents to speculate about their own histories together. Through this process a more whole institutional and geographic portrait may be rendered. Borrowing from anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, Obermiller and Maloney call for “ethnographies of the particular.”¹¹⁶ The current well-circulated narratives of Black Mountain College present an ethnography of the Modernist avant-garde. Calls for future projects tendered here hope to activate an *alter-ethnographic livewire*, seizing mechanisms in the present that historically characterize regional neglect on multiple fronts.

As art history and visual studies hopefully contend more with Black Mountain College as it stands in relation to Appalachian Studies, the various practices of the latter still have much to offer. *Where do these projects go once they're produced?* This question re-rings the alarm about the overall health of artworld ecosystems, where exhibition structures, museums, galleries, programming, press, and yes, markets, remain a fundamental part of geographic inequities, which prevent critically-engaged contemporary artists (beyond or in addition to “craft”) and culture workers from thriving in the mountains of North Carolina, much less Appalachia in a broader view. The very notion of a contemporary art history of Appalachia remains vastly under sourced.¹¹⁷ From the explosive influence of Black Mountain College masses of unnurtured realities continue to outly the study of its blast radius. I urge scholars, theorists, activists, artists, and art historians to come correct and whole about *where* Black Mountain College was.

¹ Lynne Cooke, *Outliers and American Vanguard Art*, (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2018). The *Outliers* exhibition was organized by The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C where it first showed January 28-May 13, 2018. The show then traveled to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, June 24-September 30, 2018 and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, November 18, 2018-March 18, 2019.

² Appalachian State University, "Black Mountain College Semester," *Appalachia Online*, last accessed January 23, 2022, <https://appalachiaonline.appstate.edu/black-mountain-college-semester>

³ Cratis D. Williams and Sandra L. Ballard, "With an Alumnus at Black Mountain College." *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 574

⁴ Williams and Ballard. "With an Alumnus at Black Mountain College." 576. On page 574-575 Ballard also quotes Leon Lewis, who notes Martin Duberman's legendary and foundational text about Black Mountain College, *Black Mountain: An Experiment in Community*. According to Ballard, Lewis states, "Duberman avoids the subject of place almost entirely," but then speculates, "an interesting book might be written on the continuing reaction of the local mountaineers to the college."

⁵ Joseph Bathanti. "The Mythic School of the Mountain: Black Mountain College." *Our State Magazine*. April 2, 2014. <https://www.ourstate.com/mythic-mountain-college/>. Joseph Bathanti writes: "Among the American public and academic community at the time, not to mention the rather suspicious Buncombe [County] locals, there was a general lack of interest in Black Mountain [College]." Bathanti repeats: "Many local Buncombe [County] citizens regarded Black Mountain [College] with suspicion and disdain."

⁶ Martha R. Severens, "'The Pedestal Has Crashed': Issues Facing Women Artists in the South" in *Central to their Lives: Southern Women Artists in the Johnson Collection*, ed. Blackman, Lynne, (University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, SC, 2018), 5. Severens writes Black Mountain College "...attracted impressive global talent both as faculty and students. However, few native Southerners went there, perhaps because its curriculum was considered too experimental."

⁷ Garry Barker, *The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990*. (University of Tennessee Press. Knoxville, TN. 1991), 42. Barker writes that Black Mountain College was thought of as a controversial and "...free-spirited institution that drew a talented, outspoken faculty, whose thoughts and actions outraged the conservative, little Carolina community."

⁸ Garry Barker, *The Handcraft Revival in Southern Appalachia, 1930-1990*, 42-43. Barker quotes David Whisnant from *All That is Native and Fine* (a title which strikes at some of the self-indigenization of Appalachia discussed later in the article): "If Black Mountain [College] people shared any estimate of the local people and culture, it appears to have been one of contempt. Students seem to have in the main shared Peggy Bennett Cole's feelings that coming across Black Mountain teacher Josef Albers in '[a] hillbilly setting, in the Southern Baptist convention country of the Tarheel State was like finding remnants of an advanced civilization in the midst of a jungle.'" Barker does assure us, though, that there were other likely inroads and alliances between BMC faculty and local progressive craft guild leaders.

⁹ Ross Hair. "'Hemi-demi-semi barbaric yawps': Jonathan Williams and Black Mountain." *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*, Vol. 3, September 2012. One conviction which may assist our aims comes from Ross' assessment that "Williams' return to Buncombe County (after leaving) to study at BMC, and the interest in dialect and "mountain speech" that resulted from it, is a telling reminder that "radical" means to be progressive and innovative, as well as *rooted*." Ross' later publication *Avant-Folk: Small Press Poetry Networks 1950 to the Present* looks at the relations across small British and American poetry presses to understand "the intersection of folk and modernist, concrete and lyric poetics."

¹⁰ Darby English, "Modernism's War on Terror," in *Outliers and Vanguard Art*, ed. Lynne Cooke 2018 (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2018), 31-41. English's fascinating essay opens with some potent questions relevant here: "What force was needed to open the gulf that separates the American vanguard from its outliers? How was the difference that outliers exhibit cultivated in this space? As tends to happen, the closer you look at the difference, the less absolute it appears. Yet somehow it never ceases to be crucial." (31) English revisits the understanding of "outsider art" with heady polemics of the American vanguard and its shifting-but-recursive limitations. Admitting the *Outliers* exhibit as happening "inside" the vanguard as much as it claims to be about its "outside", English stakes the exhibition as "training a gaze on the fortress wall." (37) In support of replacing the term "outsider," English also states the term *outlier* bears "the marks of a prior diminishment imminently to be addressed." (38) Noting modernism as a history of dispossession created through "spectacles of othering," English concludes (buttressed by Freudian notions of groupthink) such a process as but one "terrifying" (re: "terror" in essay title) symptom of how "self" is given and "other" is taken. (40)

¹¹ Okwui Enwezor, "The Postcolonial Constellation" from *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity, and Contemporaneity*, (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2008), 231

¹² Please see the exhibition and catalog "Black Mountain College: An Interdisciplinary Experiment 1933-1957." Exhibition was held at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin from June 5-September 27, 2015. Supported by the philosophies of John Dewey in the pedagogy of BMC, one memorable mark of BMC in this "interdisciplinary" turn can be seen in Robert Rauschenberg and Merce Cunningham's first "Happening" in 1952, though later championed in New York by Allan Kaprow. Another can be seen through Ruth Asawa's sculptural inspiration from dance classes with Merce Cunningham. These are but sprinkles in this genealogy.

¹³ An exhibition at the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center opened in the lower gallery on February 11, 2022 called, "Black Mountain College: Idea + Place." The exhibition arguably takes a related approach to this paper in "re-placing" the school. From the museum's website, "How can an idea inform a place? How can a place inform an idea? Would Black Mountain College have had the same identity and lifespan if it had been located in the urban Northeast, the desert Southwest, or coastal California? How did BMC's rather isolated, rural, and mountainous setting during the era of the Great Depression and the Jim Crow South influence the college community's decision-making and the evolution of ideas upon which it was based? This exhibition seeks to delve into these questions and others by exploring the Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory | Topher Lineberry

places of Black Mountain College: its two very different campuses, its influential predecessor the Bauhaus in Germany, and the post-BMC diaspora.” Accessed 2/11/22

https://www.blackmountaincollege.org/bmc_idea_and_place/

¹⁴ Susan E. Keefe, “Theorizing Modernity in Appalachia,” *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. ½ (Spring/Fall 2008), pp. 162-163.

¹⁵ bell hooks, *Belonging: A Place of Culture* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008), 20.

¹⁶ I join a growing chorus singing that the queer sexual and gender histories of BMC within the school’s institutional community are underactivated on their own. I give a shoutout to Ant Lobo-Ladd for their ongoing research on this front. Further information on queer local interlacing with BMC might be found (or is begging to be found and added) to the LGBTQ+ Oral Archive founded by UNC-Asheville and Blue Ridge Pride in 2019. In 2021, the archive announced expansion to Jackson County in partnership with Western Carolina University.

¹⁷ In tracking the long history of “intentional communities” and “back to the land” practices dotted throughout the Mountain South, I wonder out loud if there are traces or connections (if any) worth exploring between queer mountain spaces within Black Mountain College to current queer land projects like Idyll Dandy Arts (IDA) or Short Mountain Sanctuary in eastern Tennessee.

¹⁸ Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain: An Exploration in Community* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 2009, originally published 1972, 277. Wallen wanted to work with neighboring communities to establish how students from the community development program might work on a variety of local projects: “helping a farmer with his harvest; providing instruction in card weaving and drawing; ‘leading group discussions in cultural, social or political topics’; giving lectures and concerts; helping provide child-care services such as day nurseries.”

¹⁹ Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 277.

²⁰ *ibid*, 278. Mary Caroline (M.C.) Richards seemed to believe that through his proposals of community service and outreach, John Wallen neglected the priorities within the institutional community of Black Mountain College. In the words of Duberman, “it almost seemed to her, she said, that Wallen had washed his hands of the Black Mountain community and now wanted to turn his energies to the surrounding one instead. She, for one, ‘felt a kind of jealousy when individuals go out to be helpful in Old Fort and leave so many neglected opportunities, large and small, around here.’ She thoroughly agreed with Wallen that ‘living is where you live,’ that ‘it is unnatural to ignore one’s surroundings’—but *which* surroundings, ‘which realities is he going to select to face up to?’”

²¹ Okwui Enwezor, “The Postcolonial Constellation”, 209—Enwezor provides a list of perceived distinctions from which these tensions emerge and resonate with Susan E. Keefe’s application of Western hegemony onto an essentialist notion of Appalachia, “...developed and underdeveloped, the reactionary and the progressive, the regressive and the advanced.”

²² Former director of John C. Campbell Folk School Jan Davidson points out that a common misconception is “folk school” means “a school of folk arts.” Davidson clarifies: “Folk school: it’s about the Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory | Topher Lineberry

folks.” Rather, while folk schools may happen to include artistic production, they form around a more holistic set of concerns centering the needs and desires of the people. Please see: Wagner, Kelsey and Schumann, William, “John C. Campbell & Black Mountain College: An Interview with Jan Davidson.” *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4/Vol. 45, no. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 532-539.

²³ Jan Davidson, “Intertwined Roots: Appalachian Folks Schools and Black Mountain College.” *Appalachia Online*. Accessed January 23, 2022. <https://appalachiaonline.appstate.edu/black-mountain-college-semester-project/digital-timeline/era-1-1933/appalachian-folk-schools> Perhaps the term “sustainable” is too generously applied to BMC, which was perpetually caught in a carousel of funding crises and ideological schisms, the latter often chalked up to everything being so “radical and democratic” at BMC. Carrie Hedlund in her essay, “Black Mountain College & Penland School of Crafts: Neighbors without Introduction,” notes that BMC “...failed to sustain itself as an institution...” but rebuts with a quote from M.C. Richards that maybe “Black Mountain did what it had to do and then adjourned.” (Hedlund, 531).

²⁴ Jan Davidson, “Intertwined Roots.”

²⁵ Martin Duberman, *Black Mountain*, 186-193 and 491. Using explicitly cinematic language as if narrating a storyboard, Martin Duberman begins a rather intense story about two women BMC students who, after visiting Fisk University and Highlander Folk School, venture into Tennessee and become wrongfully and invasively detained for hitchhiking though speciously charged with prostitution. The incident became a PR nightmare for Black Mountain College, which was constantly in triage for its reputation of scandal. With respect and sensitivity to the story at hand, I believe Duberman’s original impulse of video may be an effective one. *What would the story of these hitchhiking students look like from the perspective of former or practicing sex workers in the Tennessee and Carolina Mountain South?*

²⁶ John Glen, *Highlander: No Ordinary School*, 2nd ed.(Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 28.

²⁷ Helen Molesworth with Ruth Erickson, *Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957*, (New Haven and London: Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston in association with Yale University Press, 2015), 47-51.

²⁸ John Glen, *Highlander*, 27.

²⁹ For but one example, please see footnote 8.

³⁰ Overlapping with the grassroots nature of progressive education, state neglect and systemic economic precarity left a wide variety of faith-based initiatives to “fill in the gaps” for resources, needs, and experiences of folks living in the mountains.

³¹ Reflecting the white supremacy of its context, the main building at Blue Ridge Assembly was named “Robert E. Lee Hall,” often called “Lee Hall.” As with many Confederate monuments and markers built during Jim Crow apartheid, the plantation-style building was finished in 1912: many years after the 1865 conclusion of the American Civil War and abolition of slavery. The lies of whiteness often bind to southern Appalachian Protestantism, producing real consequences, disincentives, and obstructions to moral and

ethical obligations within white denominations to help end (often their own enactments of) racialized terror, discrimination, and other facets of U.S. white supremacy. On another face of this prism, white Protestant denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention are founded on leading the charge of racialized terror and white supremacy. The name of Lee Hall was changed in 2015 to Eureka Hall. Before moving to its second campus location, somewhat more humorous reflections are written about BMC students and faculty “stepping over Christians” who occupied the facilities for summer programs and remained past their welcome into the fall semesters (Duberman, 64-65). While on one hand we may hold local white Protestant institutions in historical esteem for supporting and bolstering mountain communities in a variety of creative—if not at times radical—fashions in the face of scarcity and need, we can also understand them as part of the ongoing U.S. project of white supremacy.

³² John Glen, *Highlander*, 22.

³³ While Black Mountain College is often affiliated with the ideas of John Andrew Rice and John Dewey, Highlander founder Myles Horton implemented philosophies more attuned to famed author of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” philosopher Paulo Friere. A conversation directly between Friere and Horton is available in the 1990 volume “We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change.”

³⁴ John Glen, *Highlander*, 5.

³⁵ Suzanne Penuel, “The Leisure Class: John Andrew Rice’s Free Time,” *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), 356-361.

³⁶ Hedlund, Cary. “Black Mountain College and Penland School of Crafts: Neighbors Without Introduction.” *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp 526-531, 527-528. People still shit their pants about John Dewey at BMC.

³⁷ Hedlund, Cary. “Black Mountain College and Penland,” 529. For more on Lucy Morgan’s own thoughts and reflections on Penland, please see her 1971 book, *A Gift from these Hills: Miss Lucy Morgan’s Story of Her Unique Penland School*.

³⁸ Susan E. Keefe, “Theorizing Modernity in Appalachia,” 163.

³⁹ Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, “Don’t Blame it on ZEN: The Way of John Cage & Friends”, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://www.blackmountaincollege.org/faith-in-arts/>. In October 2021, The Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center and UNCA co-hosted with numerous collaborators and funders to inaugurate the Faith in Arts Institute, exploring “the intersections of art, faith, and spirit.” The four-day event featured many thoughtful exchanges and conversations with arts and faith leaders. The accompanying exhibition at BMCM+AC, “Don’t Blame it on ZEN: The Way of John Cage & Friends” was curated by Jade Dellinger, Director of the Bob Rauschenberg at FSW. While not totally neglected from the programming of Faith in Arts, potential pitfalls of orientalism and western misunderstandings of Zen may have benefitted from more institutional framing in the exhibition itself. To their credit, these concerns were brought up in conversation through other Faith in Arts programming by Dellinger himself, Kay Larson, Pamela D. Winfield, and David Hinton. In a 1976 interview with Holly

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Martin, John Cage denied any particular “claim” to Zen: “I don’t have the right to say that I have put Zen into the work. If I love Zen, which I do, and am speaking to someone who also loves it, I don’t have the right to say I have acquired this thing which we love and have put it into my music.” (from the *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*, Volume 4, 2013). Another unaffiliated but serendipitous traveling exhibition at the Asheville Art Museum in 2021 (originating at the Longwood Arts Center in 2019), “The Rural Avant-Garde,” played up John Cage’s proximity to Zen without much attention to the possible misunderstandings of Buddhist principles and practices.

⁴⁰ Anecdotally, this was recently confirmed in my spring 2022 “Introduction to Visual Arts” class at Appalachian State University, which consisted of 3 sections with 40-50 students per section.

⁴¹ Montreat is a portmanteau of “mountain” and “retreat.” Montreat is a small town which hosts a Christian College and a Presbyterian getaway village and conference center originally funded by molasses pusher-turned-industrial candy baron, John S. Huyler.

⁴² David Silver, “The Founding of the Farm at Black Mountain College,” *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4/Vol. 45, no. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 552-563, Appalachian Journal and Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina. For the record, David Silver also provides incredible walking tours of the former Black Mountain College campus.

⁴³ Melissa Ray Davis, “Powerful Proximity: Warren Wilson College and Black Mountain College,” *Owl and Spade* (Fall 2019), pp. 29-32.

⁴⁴ Maggie McFadden, “Black Mountain College, Watauga College, and Me,” *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*, Volume 2, 2011. <http://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/volume1/1-8-maggie-mcfadden/>

⁴⁵ Alice Sebrell. “A Small but Mighty Museum: The Story of Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center.” *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4/Vol. 45, no. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 540-547, Appalachian Journal and Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina.

⁴⁶ Sebrell, “A Small but Mighty Museum,” 543-544. This programming consisted of three exhibitions of programming from 2008-2009 called “The Shape of Imagination: Women of Black Mountain College.” The first was a wide survey of women artists from BMC, the second focused on Anni Albers, Ruth Asawa, and Mary Carolina (M.C.) Richards, and the third was dedicated to Dorothea Rockburne. In 2020 Alice Sebrell returned with Kate Averett to curate an exhibition at the BMCM+AC, “Question Everything! The Women of Black Mountain College.” The exhibition page of the museum’s website opens with this quote, “*Freedom. Freedom to walk barefoot, to wear old clothes and have long hair, to have a sex life – but beyond all that to have a freedom the other side of which was (is) responsibility. And that had two sides: a responsibility to listen to the inner voice and labor to follow one’s own deepest and truest desires, and a responsibility to give to, and not just take from the school which made such choices possible for us in that place.*”—Mary Fitton Fiore (Alumna, 1949-1956) <https://www.blackmountaincollege.org/womenofbmc/>, last accessed January 23, 2022.

⁴⁷ Sebrell, *A Small but Mighty Museum*, 545.

⁴⁸ *ibid*, 546. Since Alice Sebrell's article, updated information about the Memorandum of Understanding and its programming was provided thanks to Carissa Pfeiffer at the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center.

⁴⁹ *ibid*.

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 547.

⁵¹ The residency program was originally called Black Mountain School but changed for litigious reasons.

⁵² Molesworth, *Leap Before you Look*, 45.

⁵³ Hedlund, *Black Mountain College and Penland*, 529.

⁵⁴ Arnold Aronson, *"American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History,"* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 37.

⁵⁵ Melanie Scriptunas. "Rebecca Harding Davis and the Politics of Postbellum Tourism in Southern Appalachia." *Appalachian Journal*, Spring/Summer 2016, Vol. 43, No. ¾ (Spring/Summer 2016), pp. 192-222. Appalachian Journal and Appalachian State University: Boone, NC.

⁵⁶ Wilma A. Dunaway, "Speculators and Settler Capitalists: Unthinking the Mythology about Appalachian Landholding, 1790-1860," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight D. Billings, and Altina L. Walker, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 67—On land in Southern Appalachia, Dunaway states "...by 1810 three-quarters of acreage was absentee owned, and distant speculators laid out towns, sold or leased farms to settlers, and engrossed areas believed to offer wealth in minerals."

⁵⁷ Appalachian Land Ownership Task Force, *Land Ownership Patterns and Their Impacts on Appalachian Communities: A Survey of 80 Counties*, report submitted to the Appalachian Regional Commission, 1981.

⁵⁸ Stephen Pearson, "'The Last Bastion of Settler Colonialism': Appalachian Settler Colonialism and Self-Indigenization," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 37, No. 2, (Jan. 2013), pp. 165-184.

⁵⁹ Richard Meyer, "How to Make an American Primitive," in *Outliers and Vanguard Art*, ed. Lynne Cooke 2018 (Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2018), 42-51. Insofar as Appalachia has come to be associated with "folk art" and "craft," such practices entered discourses of American modernism in the early 20th century through the pathways of Primitivism. Underlying the European modernist concept of "primitive art" relies on white colonial commerce, exploitations, and distortions of African, Oceanic, and aboriginal peoples. As the U.S. sought to define their own "primitivism" from this European model of cultural conquest, New York City began to mythologize, romanticize—often through racist imagery—a nationalist settler history through exhibitions like the 1924 Whitney Studio Club's (now the Whitney Museum of American Art) *Early American Art*; The 1930 Newark Museum's *American Primitives: An Exhibit of the Paintings of Nineteenth Century Folk Artists* and 1931 *American Folk Sculpture: The Work of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Craftsmen*; and the Museum of Modern Art's *American Folk Art: The Art of the Common Man in America, 1750-1900*.

⁶⁰ *Survivance* is a term first credited to Native American Studies in the late 1990s by Anishinaabe scholar and theorist, Gerald Robert Vizenor in his book, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: Nebraska, 1999). "Survivance is an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry." p. vii. Citing Vizenor, *survivance* has come to provide a third way to identify outside of what Jeff Benvenuto calls "problematic dichotomies between destruction and regeneration, victimization and agency, or domination and resistance. Rather than these strict binaries, these conceptual pairings are often deeply relational and dialectical." Please see: Jeff Benvenuto, "Revisiting Choctaw Ethnocide and Ethnogenesis," in *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 219-220.

⁶¹ Laurence French and Jim Hornbuckle. "Cherokee Arts and Crafts," in *The Cherokee Perspective: Written by Eastern Cherokees*, (Boone, NC: Appalachian State University, 1981), 175.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual, Inc, "Preserving a Treasure," Last accessed 1/23/22, <https://quallaartsandcrafts.org/history/>.

⁶⁴ Jon Horne Carter, "A Community Far Afield: Black Mountain College and the Southern Estrangement of the Avant-Garde," in *The Bohemian South: Creating Countercultures, from Poe to Punk*, ed. Shawn Chandler Bingham and Lindsey A. Freeman, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 54-72 Jon Horne. Horne cites Mervin Lane's now out-of-print text, *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds: An Anthology of Personal Account*, which contains many valuable stories for beginning to re-place Black Mountain College within "local" perspectives.

⁶⁵ Reserves of muscovite or "mica" were found on the college property in 1943 in what appeared to be a hole forming part of an abandoned gold mine. With supply chains from the U.S.S.R. and India disrupted by the war, the U.S. government faced a mica shortage which was needed to insulate material for machinery instruments. A government agency, The Colonial Mica Corporation in Asheville, quickly sent over a full-time miner to create a shaft and tunnels. However, the eventual reality of dynamite raised too many concerns to wholeheartedly pursue muscovite mining as part of Black Mountain College's revenue stream. (Duberman, 166) Jon Horne Carter adds to the scenery of this: "In a much remembered chapter of BMC history, the Mountaineers and local miners worked together, the local miners' harmonicas echoing deep inside the tunnels." (Carter, 61).

⁶⁶ Pearson, "Last Bastion of Colonialism," 168.

⁶⁷ Arabella Stanger, "Choreographing White Ideality: Cunningham and Black Mountain College," in *Dancing on Violent Ground: Utopia as Dispossession in Euro-American Theater Dance*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press), 131. Stanger calls upon Saidiyah Hartman, "whose excavation of the mutually defining entanglements of freedom and slavery in the economic histories of US liberalism reveals the racialized subjections underwriting liberty as an abstract ideal in this context. From Hartman I borrow the term 'white ideality' to refer to a complex of ideas concerning democracy, that, as she writes, Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory | Topher Lineberry

'instigate, transmit and effect forms of racial domination': a complex of ideas that are so often, too, cited as metaphors for the emancipatory works of Merce Cunningham." Stanger's argument comes from the question found in Hartman's 1997 book, *Scenes of Subjection*: "If white independence, freedom, and equality were purchased with slave labor, then what possibilities or opportunities exist for the black captive vessel of white ideality?" (62) Hartman footnotes this thought with a reference to David Brion Davis' 1976 book, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*.

⁶⁸ Stanger, "Choreographing White Ideality," 141-143. Stanger makes some salient observations about the documented embodied and psychological feelings of "movement" differentiated for white and Black community members during Jim Crow between on and off-campus spaces. Stanger uses these feelings to counter the philosophical and political understanding of uninhibited freedom as a basis for the "movement" in dance developed by Cunningham at Black Mountain College, which has been historically praised for conjuring "democracy" onstage.

⁶⁹ Stanger, 136.

⁷⁰ Goldstein quoted by Pearson, "Last Bastion of Colonialism," 168.

⁷¹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism (The New Critical Idiom)*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 10.

⁷² Stanger, 138.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, 138-139.

⁷⁶ Begay is absent from Helen Molesworth's *Leap Before You Look* exhibition and catalog. The following is from Appalachian State's BMCS website: "Harrison Begay (1917—2012), born Haskay Yahne Yah, & 'Warrior Who Walked Up to His Enemy' or 'The Wandering Boy,' was a well-known Navajo artist who specialized in watercolor paintings and silk-screen prints. He is best known for his scenes of traditional Navajo life. Begay was born in White Cone, near Keams Canyon, Arizona. He spent his early years with his family in a hogan, where he was raised tending goats and sheep, and speaking only the traditional Navajo language, Diné. In 1934 he began attending the Santa Fe Indian School where he became a prominent student in Dorothy Dunn's Studio School. Dunn was well-known for teaching her students 'flat-style painting,' using flat fields of color outlined in black. During the Depression, he worked for the Work's Program Administration (WPA) painting public murals.

"In 1940 Begay enrolled at Black Mountain College to study architecture on a scholarship from the Indian Commission, before returning to Arizona to study at the Phoenix Junior College. Begay served for three years in the U.S. Army during World War II, traveling to Europe and Iceland. In 1946, he received a purchase award at the first annual Indian painting competition at the Philbrook Museum of Art, which was one of the earliest programs dedicated to promoting Native American fine art. Begay went on to win many awards during his long career as an artist, among them: the Native American Master's Award from the Heard Museum, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southwestern Association for Indian Arts, and Black Mountain College: *Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory* | Topher Lineberry

the Palmes d'Academies from the French government. During the 1950s, Begay and other Native American artists founded Tewa Enterprises in Santa Fe, one of the first Native-owned art reproduction businesses. In 1997, Begay was named an Arizona Indian Living Treasure for his many contributions to traditional Navajo cultural arts." <https://appalachiaonline.appstate.edu/node/111>, accessed 1/23/22.

⁷⁷ "LANDBACK is a movement that has existed for generations with a long legacy of organizing and sacrifice to get Indigenous Lands back into Indigenous hands. Currently, there are LANDBACK battles being fought all across Turtle Island, to the north and the South. As NDN Collective, we are stepping into this legacy with the launch of the LANDBACK Campaign as a mechanism to connect, coordinate, resource and amplify this movement and the communities that are fighting for LANDBACK. The closure of Mount Rushmore, return of that land and all public lands in the Black Hills, South Dakota is our cornerstone battle, from which we will build out this campaign. Not only does Mount Rushmore sit in the heart of the sacred Black Hills, but it is an international symbol of white supremacy and colonization. To truly dismantle white supremacy and systems of oppression, we have to go back to the roots. Which, for us, is putting Indigenous Lands back in Indigenous hands. In addition, LANDBACK is more than just a campaign. It is a political framework that allows us to deepen our relationships across the field of organizing movements working towards true collective liberation. It allows us to envision a world where Black, Indigenous & POC liberation co-exists. It is our political, organizing and narrative framework from which we do the work."—accessed 1/23/22, <https://landback.org/>.

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Harney and Ruth B. Phillips, *Mapping Modernisms: Art, Indigeneity, Colonialism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁷⁹ Lowery Stokes Sims, *Challenge of the Modern: African-American Artists, 1925-1945*, (Harlem, NY: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2003).

⁸⁰ Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet to Matisse*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁸¹ Adrienne L. Childs and Valerie Kassel Oliver, et al, *Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition*. (New York, NY: Rizzoli Electa, 2020).

⁸² bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," *Postmodern Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Sep. 1990).

⁸³ Michele Wallace, "Modernism, Post-Modernism, and the Problem of the Visual in Afro-American Culture," in *Dark Designs in Visual Culture*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 39-50.

⁸⁴ Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 11.

⁸⁵ Haley, *No Mercy Here*, 11.

⁸⁶ The relationship between Anni Albers, her modernist sensibilities, and (the often tumultuous) Appalachian textile factories have been grossly under-elaborated.

⁸⁷ Keefe, 163.

⁸⁸ Haley, 11.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Mervin Lane, *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds: An Anthology of Personal Accounts*: "Most eerie of my glimpses of a different world in the South were those of the chain gangs, which seemed a normal occurrence as we came across them during carefree hikes along the mountain roads and paths. I was really seeing them, not watching a movie or imagining such a sight from a book. There they were, men wearing ankle irons, or they were chained together, or they wore heavy iron balls which they dragged along the dusty road, seeming to walk in slow motion from the weight of their burden. They wore striped uniforms and moved in ant lines. The rifles held in the arms of the guards, whose forefingers grasped the triggers, had a terrifying effect on me. I saw the gun barrels shoved so close to the faces and eyes of the prisoners. It was hard to take in this spectacle of human beings carrying on in such conditions of humiliation and deprivation." (147-148). Though eventually phased out by new technologies, the state of North Carolina used chain gangs until July 1973. The development of roads and highways in the late 19th through mid-20th centuries in western NC was key for connecting access to Black Mountain College, as well as facilitating a wave of Appalachian out-migration, which overlaps with the larger Great Migration of Black individuals, families, and communities moving North and elsewhere in the U.S.

⁹¹ Haley, *No Mercy Here*, 27.

⁹² Those who rode the Western North Carolina Railroad utilized infrastructure originally incorporated through the labor of enslaved persons in 1855, and its expansion to Asheville occurred through exploitation and abuse of majority Black convicts in the 1880s following Reconstruction.

⁹³ Jon Horne Carter (cites Lane), 57.

⁹⁴ A holding cell was re-created for the Swannanoa Valley Museum exhibition, "Black Mountain College and Black Mountain, NC: Where 'Town' Meets 'Gown'."

⁹⁵ Mervin Lane, *Black Mountain College: Sprouted Seeds: an Anthology of Personal Accounts*. (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press), 1991. 97

⁹⁶ Such stories include: Janet Heling Roberts who played piano at local churches, including a local Black church, though the congregation in the account is unnamed (Lane, 129). *What would it look like for contemporary practitioners to find the names of these congregations, see if they still exist, and gain perspective from current members about this overlapping history with Black Mountain College?* Other stories of white students attending church with Black teachers exist, as well as encounters with racism off-campus, such as Mary Parks Washington using segregated Asheville bus system, or Delores Fullman who was forced to sit in the balcony of a segregated movie theater (and who was joined by Andy Oates and other white students in solidarity). On campus Black Mountain College hosted conferences in support of the fledgling Civil Rights Movement and in 1947 hosted Freedom Riders (which included Bayard Rustin among them) from the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), who were on a "Journey of Reconciliation" throughout the South. Please see: Micah Wilford Wilkins, "Social Justice at BMC Before the Civil Rights Age: Desegregation, Racial Inclusion, and Racial Equality," *Journal of Black Mountain College Studies*, Volume 6, June 2014. <http://www.blackmountainstudiesjournal.org/volume6/6-17-micah-wilkins/>

⁹⁷ Bob Wunsch wrote Rubye Lipsey, who had worked in the BMC kitchen with her husband Jack, and had just recently moved to Atlanta. While revisiting the primary source would likely refresh the narrative and add much-needed perspective, from Duberman's summary, Lipsey "...responded to Wunsch's query with a long letter calling the idea of integration 'noble,' but questioning its practicality; whites, she cautioned, first had to be 'educated up' to the idea, a process that 'will take years because no one can do away with a thought in a day that has been growing in them all of their lives.' She reminded Wunsch of a seminary in Anniston, Alabama that had added a few black teachers to its faculty-and was promptly burned to the ground. 'BMC,' she concluded, 'is a part of the community, therefore the community must be considered.'" (Duberman, 181)

⁹⁸ Duberman, 180-181: "'The only question in my mind,' Wunsch wrote to one, is 'timing; is now the right time to make this radical departure from Southern procedure? I do not want to be cowardly; at the same time I don't want to be foolhardy.' Zora Hurston, the distinguished black anthropologist who visited Black Mountain that same year, wrote Wunsch, 'even at this distance I can see the dynamite in the proposal to take Negro students *now*. Confidentially, some of these Left-wing people get me down. They always want to spring some sensation that gives *them* great publicity, but which does *us* no good. Sometimes *positive* harm.'" (original emphasis).

⁹⁹ Alma Stone Williams, "My Black Mountain Summer: A Personal Account," *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 584-599. Stone states: "Other Black students and faculty followed in succeeding years. It is time for this achievement to be acknowledged." (598)

¹⁰⁰ I would like readers and interested researchers to know that Black Mountain College private student files have just recently been "declassified" in the Western Regional Archives.

¹⁰¹ Duberman, 218.

¹⁰² Jacob Lawrence has more recently become a flashpoint for recuperations of Black contribution to BMC, evidenced in part by the 2018-2019 exhibition at BMCM+AC, "Between Form and Content: Perspectives on Jacob Lawrence and Black Mountain College."

¹⁰³ Knight was Jacob Lawrence's spouse who was never an official BMC teacher but taught informal dance classes on campus. Knight was also a distinguished artist working in painting and collage with her own career. Both Knight and Lawrence were mentored in Harlem by famed sculptor, Augusta Savage at the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts. With cameo appearances in BMC's history from other figures like Zora Neale Hurston, members associated with the Harlem Renaissance create another notable thread through the school, helping to cement its place as a crucible of the American avant-garde.

¹⁰⁴ "This exhibition illuminates Asheville as a city undergoing transformation, the changing Appalachian region, and modernism and abstraction as a liberating aesthetic for Black artists. ACTIVE ARCHIVE resident curator Marie T. Cochran reflects on the relationship between BMC's modernism and progressive movements of civil and human rights. "Rooted in the modernism of celebrated Black Mountain College instructor in painting Jacob Lawrence and his colleagues and students, *adVANCE* bridges the past and future by acknowledging the debt that Western modernism owes to African aesthetic practices as well as Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory | Topher Lineberry

its inherent progressive ideals which persist in our region. *adVANCE: Modernism, Black Liberation + Black Mountain College* celebrates the works of prolific Asheville-based sculptor Larry Paul King who presents a path forward through abstraction and modernist principles of design. King's work will be displayed alongside selections from BMCM+AC's permanent collection, including works by Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, Joseph Fiore, Leo Krikorian, and Sewell Silman. Designer Reggie Tidwell will bookend the exhibition with digital installations commemorating the protests and calls for justice undertaken in Asheville in the summer of 2020." <https://www.blackmountaincollege.org/advance-modernism-liberation-black-mountain-college/>. Last accessed 1/23/22.

¹⁰⁵ Frank X Walker, *Affrilachia*, (Lexington, KY: Old Cove Press, 2000). Walker's iconic work of poetry helped popularize the term Affrilachia but its usage circulated some time before its publication.

¹⁰⁶ One starting place for understanding this history is Fayette A. Allen's 1974 essay, "Blacks in Appalachia," *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 5, No. 9, pp. 42-51. More recently, Ph.D candidate Jillean McCommons has been working to specifically historicize Civil Rights and Black Power in Appalachia which sheds further light on how Black Appalachian Studies has developed as a field. In an article about the 1972 Sanctified Hill Disaster in Kentucky, McCommons frames the activism of the local community in dialogue with the Black Appalachian Regional Commission: "Active from 1969 to 1975, the organization worked to develop a regional Black consciousness and solidarity across thirteen states. Developed during the aftermath of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, part of its strategy was to push federal agencies to distribute anti-poverty funds directly to Black communities who were some of the poorest in the region, a fact the BAC argued was obscured by the federal focus on Appalachia as a white region. The BAC did not just ask for a portion of federal funds to combat poverty. They sought the power for Black communities to decide how those funds would be used." Please see: Jillean McCommons, "Appalachian Hillsides as Black Ecologies: Housing, Memory, and The Sanctified Hill Disaster of 1972", *Black Perspectives*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.aaihs.org/appalachian-hillsides-as-black-ecologies-housing-memory-and-the-sanctified-hill-disaster-of-1972/>.

¹⁰⁷ Enkeshi El-Amin and William Isom II, *Sponsored by Berea College, Loyal Jones Appalachian Center, Black in Appalachia the Podcast*, Appalachian Studies Association Virtual Conference, Sunday Closing Plenary March 14, 2021: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sq9E4tE23G4PHXMv9Er4qRg0vCgh39Qw/view>

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Barbara Ellen Smith and Steve Fisher, "Reinventing the Region: Defining, Theorizing, Organizing Appalachia," *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 2016), pp. 76-79. University of Illinois on behalf of the Appalachian Studies Association, Inc.

¹¹⁰ I encourage readers to see celebrated Highlander Folk School alum Bernice Johnson Reagon's "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century," in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, edited by Barbara Smith, (New York, NY: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), 356-368. In contemporary art, Martine Syms recently invoked Reagon in her work for the 2019 Whitney Biennial, titled *Intro to Threat Modeling* (2017). Taylor Renee Aldridge reflects on Syms' interpolation of Reagon's ideas in her September 19, 2019 *ARTnews* Black Mountain College: Eclipsing the Local in Artworld Memory | Topher Lineberry

article, 'We Ourselves Are Our Prize': Lasting Works in the Whitney Biennial Evoke Toni Morrison and Ancestry Through the Ages." <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/reviews/toni-morrison-2019-whitney-biennial-13247/>

¹¹¹ Kentgens-Craig, Margret, "Josef Albers at Black Mountain College: Infusing Modernism into Mainstream North Carolina Culture." *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), pp. 440-459.

¹¹² Heather South, "Black Mountain College Through the Eyes of an Archivist," *Appalachian Journal*, Vol. 44/45, Vol. 44, no. 3-4, Vol. 45. No. 1-2 (2017/2018), 549.

¹¹³ Zion, Amy and Fisher, Cora. "Regionalism Versus Provincialism: Agitating Against Critical Neglect in Art World Peripheries." *Momus*. April 18, 2016

<https://momus.ca/regionalism-vs-provincialism-agitating-against-critical-neglect-in-artworld-peripheries/>

¹¹⁴ *ibid*.

¹¹⁵ Phillip J Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney, "The Uses and Misuses of Appalachian Culture", *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, Spring 2016, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 2016), pp. 103-112..

¹¹⁶ Obermiller and Maloney, "The Uses and Misuses of Appalachian Culture," 107. Obermiller and Maloney hope to replace broad gestures toward a vague "Appalachian culture," citing Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture," from *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991), pp. 137-54. On "the particular," Abu-Lughod writes from her own essay: "I also want to make clear what the argument for particularity is not: it is not to be mistaken for arguments for privileging micro over macro processes. Ethnomethodologists [...] and other students of everyday life seek ways to generalize about microinteractions, while historians might be said to be tracing the particulars of macroprocesses. Nor need a concern with the particulars of individuals' lives imply disregard for forces and dynamics that are not locally based. On the contrary, the effects of extralocal and long-term processes are only manifested locally and specifically, produced in the actions of individuals living their particular lives, inscribed in their bodies and words. What I am arguing for is a form of writing that might better convey that."

¹¹⁷ There is not a total or absolute void on this front. One of the only major contemporary art exhibitions at a "mainstream" institution focusing on Appalachia was the 1981, "More than Land or Sky: Art from Appalachia" at the National Museum of American Art, curated by Barbara Shissler Nosanow. Many of the artists from this exhibition endure scarcity in the corporate commonwealth of Google and other databases like ARTSTOR. With a mostly black and white print catalog available, the original color slide images for the show currently remain locked away in the Smithsonian Archives (source: email from Smithsonian Museum, September 13, 2021). Dotted throughout the actual region have been exhibitions, including, but not limited to, The Huntington Art Museum's touring 1990-1993 exhibition, "O Appalachia: Art From the Southern Mountains," starting in Huntington, WV; The Asheville Art Museum's 2019 "Appalachia Now!" and the William King Museum in Abingdon, VA 2013-2014 "From These Hills: Contemporary Art in the Southern Appalachian Highlands." A number of smaller artist-run galleries and institutions in the region

also focus on contemporary art from Appalachia. There is currently no comprehensive or well-circulated project which addresses contemporary art within Appalachia. More hopeful, though—some with Appalachian subthemes—are exhibitions which focus on contemporary art in the American South, such as “When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination in the American South” (2014, ICA Boston, curated by Thelma Golden); “Southern Accent: Seeking the American South in Contemporary Art” (2016, Nasher Museum at Duke University, curated by Miranda Lash and Trevor Schoonmaker) and “The Dirty South” (2021, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver). I apologize to any agents or institutions who may feel, ironically, eclipsed or forgotten by this vastly incomplete preliminary summary of regional contemporary art history. I welcome a dialogue in breaking it open, expanding, and continuing to build.