

EDUCATION + OUTREACH

Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center preserves and continues the legacy of educational and artistic innovation of Black Mountain College. We achieve our mission through collection, conservation, and educational activities including exhibitions, publications, and public programs. It is our goal to reach students and artists of all ages, inviting them into the history of Black Mountain College. Below are just a few opportunities to spark scholarship, discussions, and creative practices:

FIELD TRIPS AND CLASS VISITS reach a wide audience of learners across all ages, both in person and (since 2020) virtually. Through the Asheville City Schools Foundation TAPAAS (Teaching Artists Presenting in Asheville Area Schools) program, BMCM+AC staff have led field trips for middle and high school students that emphasized democratic communities, the Black Mountain Poets, social justice at BMC, and the ways in which contemporary artists connect the legacy of the college to present-day concerns. To schedule please contact Kira Houston at kira@blackmountaincollege.org.

TOURS of the historic [Black Mountain College campus at Lake Eden](#) are held on a regular basis. They offer a history of Black Mountain College situated on the site itself. Contact Outreach Coordinator, Kira Houston, to schedule a tour at kira@blackmountaincollege.org.

INTERNSHIPS at BMCM+AC allow students to gain behind the scenes, hands-on experience in museum and non-profit work. Since 2022 we have partnered with UNCA to create the Black Mountain College UNCA Internship Program, a paid, semester-long opportunity. We also host independent project-based internships. Interns are invited to hone their skills and develop new ones while assisting with event support, outreach, marketing, publications, and collections. Get in touch with your resume and cover letter at info@blackmountaincollege.org to learn more.

ReVIEWING CONFERENCE is a forum for scholars and artists to contribute original work on topics related to Black Mountain College and its place in cultural history. The format is designed to be interdisciplinary, with sessions that will include panels, presentations, performances, and workshops. BMC itself was a uniquely interdisciplinary organization, generating output from its faculty and students that often involved the melding of the visual, performing, and literary arts. The theme of the 2023 **ReVIEWING Black Mountain College Conference** (to be held fall 2022 in Asheville, North Carolina) will be the significance and legacy of BMC's weaving program.

{Re}HAPPENING is a one-day event at the historic campus of Black Mountain College, 15 minutes from Asheville. The **{Re}HAPPENING** is part art event, part fundraiser, and part community instigator, providing a platform for contemporary artists to share their responses to the vital legacy of Black Mountain College by activating the buildings and grounds of the BMC campus with installations, new media, music, and performance projects. The **{Re}HAPPENING** is a community effort, supported by a dedicated team of volunteers and our yearly cohort of 20+ collaborating artists.

JOURNAL OF BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE STUDIES is a peer-reviewed open-access digital publication of BMCM+AC. The *Journal* seeks to host diverse works by writers and artists of varied backgrounds. We welcome academic articles, essays, reviews, poetry, images, and forms of artistic expression. Submissions may include articles, poems, memoirs, images, videos, or other material that can be presented in an online format. Authors retain all rights to their individual work. Please refer to our [contributor guidelines](#) for more information. We look forward to hearing from you! Email us at journalbmcstudies@gmail.com

DIGITAL RESOURCES at BMCM+AC are ever-growing. **Museum from Home** is the go-to spot for digital exhibitions, performances, programs, lectures, collections spotlights, podcasts, and more. **Research resources** are continually compiled through our website, including [growing digital access to our permanent collection](#) of over 3,000 objects and artworks.

SAMPLE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION + PERSONAL EXPRESSION AT BLACK MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Follow orange links to explore further and learn more.



A Brief History

Black Mountain College (BMC) was founded in 1933 with the intention of creating an experimental college that put art at the center of the student experience. **Based on the democratic ideals of philosopher John Dewey, BMC had the goal of creating an environment where there was no hierarchy between students and faculty.** Grades and degrees took a backseat to experiences and ideas, with students challenged to discover themselves as artists, individuals, and citizens through a liberal arts curriculum. Legendary even in its own time, Black Mountain College attracted and created maverick spirits, some of whom went on to become well-known and extremely influential individuals in the latter half of the 20th century. BMC closed in 1957.

Gender and Sexuality at BMC

For many of the women who came to Black Mountain College to study, teach, and work, the college was a place where they had the freedom to explore their identities in ways they couldn't in their families or communities. **While still subject to the gender biases of the mid 20th century, women played a crucial role in the college, particularly during wartime, and found new freedoms there.**



SAMPLE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE

In the digital portal for our exhibition *Question Everything! The Women of Black Mountain College* you can hear from the women themselves and explore the many ways that they shaped arts and culture. Black Mountain College was also a refuge for many queer students and faculty, including John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly, and Peggy Tolk Watkins. The space that BMC provided for self reflection and expression allowed for many students to explore their identities and come to know themselves better as individuals. Student Michael Rumaker, in particular, writes about his coming of age at BMC in his memoir *Black Mountain Days*, while Martin Duberman wrote the history of the college through his perspective as a queer historian in *Black Mountain College: An Exploration of Community*.



Integration at BMC

With many of BMC's founding faculty coming to the college as refugees from war torn Europe, the systems of racial oppression at work in the American South led to over a decade of debates on whether the college should integrate. Many community members voiced fears for the safety of the college, faculty, and students while the student body itself, along with key members of faculty, felt that it was their responsibility to play a part in dismantling Jim Crow laws. Making history, Alma Stone Williams was the first African American student to attend an all white college in the Jim Crow South. She was the first Black student invited to BMC in their 1944 experiment in integration, ten years before Brown v Board of Education made segregation in schools illegal across the



country. Williams would be one of a small but influential roster of Black students and faculty including artists *Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence*.

SAMPLE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE

The Poets of Black Mountain College + The Black Mountain Poets



The latter years for the college (1950 - 1957) were defined by the poets of Black Mountain College, with many students drawn to the college, in large part, to study with **Charles Olson** who came to BMC in 1948 and became rector of the college in 1953. Olson, a “bear of a man” at close to 6’ 8”, has also towered over the history of this era. Olson’s *Maximus Poems*, a landmark work of **projective verse**, was published by the **Jargon Society Press**, an independent publishing house founded by BMC student Jonathan Williams.

Jonathan Williams would spend his life publishing the works of lesser known poets, writers, and artists. A native of Western North Carolina, Williams placed southern voices at the forefront. One example of this is Jargon’s most popular publication *White Trash Cooking* by **Ernest Matthew Mickler**. This subversive but empathetic look at rural southern culture was a hit and one of the only Jargon publications to ever turn a profit.



Another tenet of the community, the teacher, poet, and potter **M.C. Richards**, was the intellectual powerhouse of the college from the late 1940s through the 1950s. She was a leading force in the Black Mountain Press which would become the hugely influential Black Mountain Review and assured Olson’s position at the college before departing for Stoney Point in New York (another influential, experimental community and unofficial outpost of BMC founded by alumni Paul and Vera Williams). Her best known work, *Centering: In Pottery, Poetry, and the Person* represents her philosophy and has become an underground classic.

SAMPLE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE

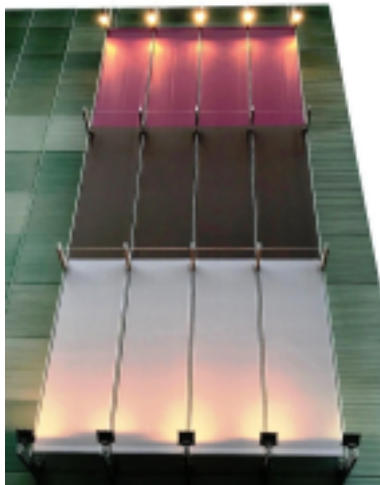
The Black Mountain Review + “The Black Mountain Poets”

The first issues of The Black Mountain Review appeared in 1954 and were edited by Robert Creeley. The 7th and last issue – known as the “Beat” issue because of its concentration of artists and poets who were and would become influential within the Beat movement – was actually published in the fall of 1957, after the closure of College in 1956. Among the foundational works and writers featured in this unprepossessing little volume: *America* by Allen Ginsberg, an excerpt from *Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs, “Bottom: On Shakespeare (Part II)” by Louis Zukofsky, an excerpt from “October in the Railroad Earth” by Jack Kerouac, and “Changes: 3” by Gary Snyder.

The poets published in The Black Mountain Review, whether they were part of the BMC community or not, are considered the “Black Mountain Poets.” This grouping is not inclusive of the full range of poetics explored at the College, excluding those by women such as Hilda Morley and MC Richards. Notably, the only woman included in the “Black Mountain Poets,” Denise Levertov, was never at Black Mountain College. While the “Black Mountain Poets” were a hugely influential group, it is important to make the distinction between them and the poets of Black Mountain College. This lack of representation is indicative of the misogynistic nature of this era in poetry as well as at BMC during this time period. Women such as the novelist, journalist, and memoirist Francine du Plessix Gray were outspoken about their experiences of sexism at the hands of Olson and his students.

BMCM+AC is in the process of publishing a new anthology of poetry by the poets of Black Mountain College which seeks to amend the gaps and tell a fuller story of the groundbreaking poets that BMC produced.

SAMPLE VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE



Contemporary Responses

As a museum and arts center BMCM+AC works with contemporary artists and scholars that are influenced by Black Mountain College. Through performances, artworks, and presentations, their perspectives shine a light on how BMC is relevant to identity struggles of today. The digital programs listed below are only a few from artists and scholars who explore their own identities through the lens of BMC or its associated artists. For more, visit our [Museum From Home](#) page and join our free digital [events](#).

- **Letters to Maximus** - Gloucester born poet Amanda Cook speaks back to Charles Olson in a series of readings that recon with their shared histories
- **TAYO** - Filipino artist Grace Villamil creates a community sculpture in solidarity with families separated at the US/Mexico border
- **Ruth Asawa's Radical Universalism** - How are Ruth Asawa's hanging wire sculptures a form of activism for racial justice?
- **Steven Locke and Ben Hall: Homage to the Auction Block** - artist Steve Locke creates paintings and installations that call attention to our nation's history of racial violence
- **We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite** - Fresh Cut Orchestra and Melanie Charles perform a restaging of the first openly political jazz recording, a landmark of the Civil Rights Movement.

Quick Links

[Museum from Home: Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center](#)

Digital Exhibitions:

[Question Everything! The Women of Black Mountain College](#)

[Politics at Black Mountain College](#)

[Between Form and Content: Perspectives on Jacob Lawrence and BMC](#)

[Follow us on Instagram for BMC history and digital events @bmc Museum](#)