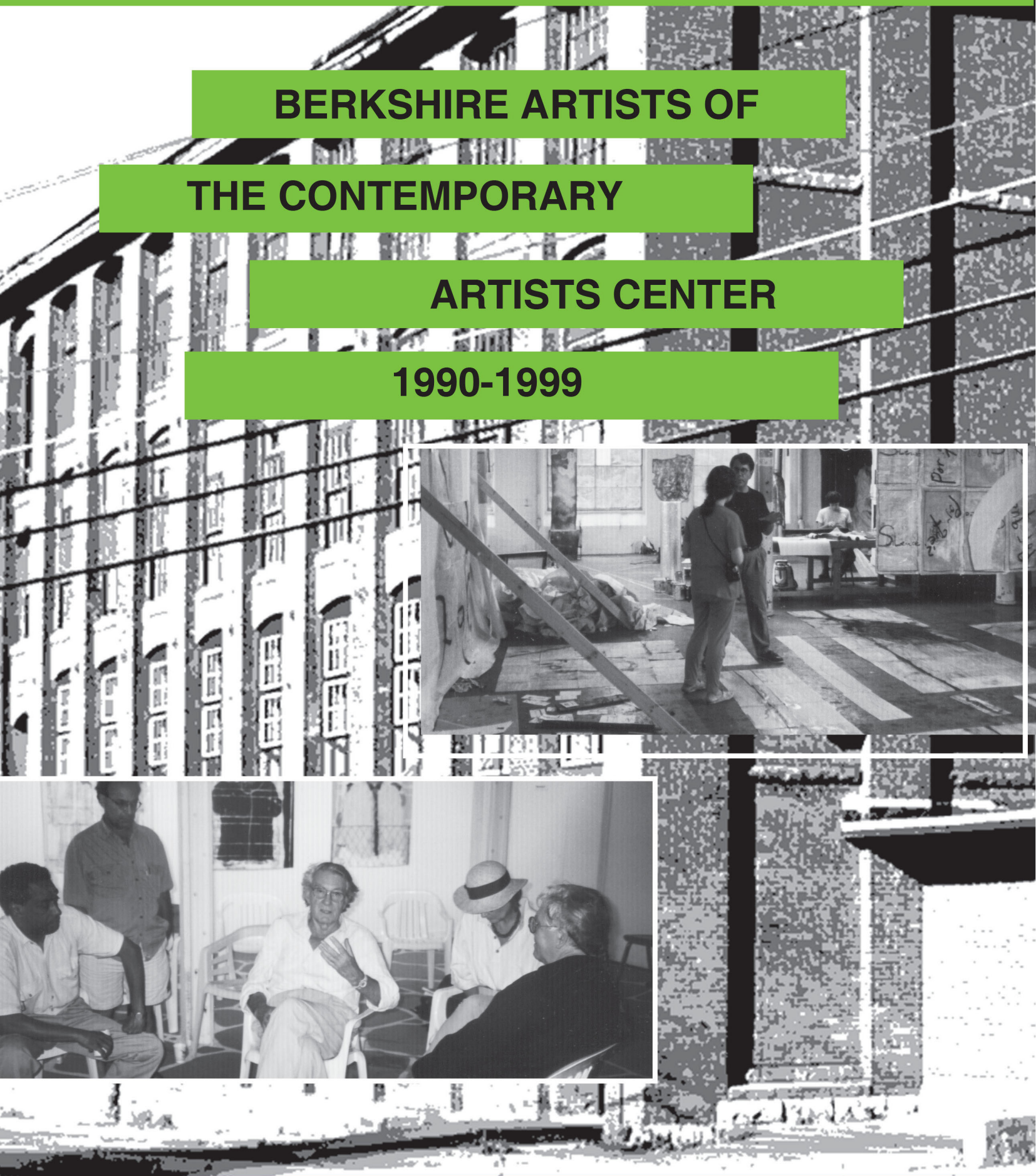


B E R K S H I R E A R T M U S E U M

**BERKSHIRE ARTISTS OF
THE CONTEMPORARY**

ARTISTS CENTER

1990-1999



S U M M E R 2 0 1 6

BERKSHIRE ARTISTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

Dale Bradley, Christopher Gillooly, Brandon Graving, Robert Henriquez, Henry Klein,
Barbara May, Robert Schechter, Maria Siskind, David Zaig,

Berkshire Art Museum 2016 Exhibition

BERKSHIRE ARTISTS OF THE
CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM

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For information address: Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation,
189 Beaver Street, North Adams, MA 01247

First Edition: June 2016
Printed in the United States of America.

BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM
2016 Exhibition Catalogue

BERKSHIRE ARTISTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

Dale Bradley, Christopher Gillooly, Brandon Graving, Robert Henriquez, Henry Klein,
Barbara May, Robert Schechter, Maria Siskind, David Zaig,

Berkshire Art Museum 2016 Exhibition

This exhibition showcases the work of nine artists who had a close association with the Contemporary Artists Center (CAC)s and to the Berkshires. In addition to engaging the few artists who were already here, the CAC stimulated hundreds of artists to visit the area, some who later made the Berkshires their permanent home - David Zaig (then living in Cambridge, MA and who served as one of the main staff artists), Brandon Graving (who came from New Orleans as an attending artist and later became its master printmaker), Robert Henriquez (who was the very first attending artist from NYC and later became involved as a visiting artist) and Henry Klein (who first came from Connecticut as an attending artist). Artists already living in the area became very active with the CAC's art programs, including Maria Siskind (primarily sculpture) and Christopher Gillooly (photography and sculpture), both who were engaged in all aspects of the CAC's programs. Barbara May came to the Berkshires around the time that the CAC was started, in part to share in the artistic renaissance that MASS MoCA projected to bring. New York artist Robert Schechter came to the CAC to work on the "Monster Press," and later purchased a house in South Berkshire County.

The vitality of the work created by these artists represents much of why

the CAC became well known in art circles around the world. These artists utilize all types of art processes, including paint, print technology, large printmaking, photography and sculpture.

The Contemporary Artists Center was founded by Barbara and Eric Rudd in 1990. During the first summer session, 19 artists from around the United States came to reside, work and interact in the Historic Beaver Mill in North Adams. By the second season and each subsequent summer, more than 100 artists from around the country and world came to the CAC to live and create and exhibit. The CAC also invited some of the world's most important museum/gallery directors and artists to interact with attending artists, including such notable museum figures as Tom Krens (Guggenheim), Kirk Varnedoe (MOMA) and Walter Hopps (Menil) and such distinguished artists as Julian Schnabel, Jenny Holzer, Elizabeth Murray, Judy Pfaff, Grace Hartigan, Larry Bell, and many others.

During the 1990s, the CAC's residency program encouraged new work, and the CAC provided 5 galleries for an average of 15 shows each summer to show that new work; in addition, the CAC sponsored workshops geared for large-scale printmaking, weekly lectures, performances and events, and

established "Downtown Installations," where attending CAC artists created large installations in the many empty downtown storefronts. Rudd directed the CAC for ten years, and the CAC continued to operate for seven additional years, before downsizing and moving out of the region.

The remarkable 17-year history of the CAC indicates clearly that the CAC - along with MASS MoCA, which opened ten years after the CAC was started - was a major catalyst for many artists to move to the area. Today, hundreds of artists are now living and working in mill studios and other workspaces throughout the northern Berkshires, and many are actively engaged in stimulating the arts for the community.



David Zaig

My time at the CAC 1990—1998

David Zaig, born in Jerusalem, Israel
Graduate of the Slade School of Fine Arts, University of London.
Taught and exhibited in England and the US.

Published articles in
MIT'S LEONARDO,
The journal of the international
Society for the Arts, Science and
Technology.

Films:

1. Homage to Magritte, 16 mm, 10 min. 1975
2. Works 1976/1986, 3 min.

When Eric bought the Beaver Mill, the previous occupants left an unbelievable amount of garbage, black dirt and oil. Of course, Eric had it cleaned up; at least 45 dumpsters full of filthy rubbish were hauled out of the building.

On the positive side, the building came with unbelievably large tables of different sizes, the largest was about 50 feet long. Artists who participated in our summer sessions utilized them to the max. There was no shortage of drawing and printing paper donated by the paper mills in our area. We were also invited to see how the paper was made during tours of the mills. One memorable artist, Rosa Vasquez from Spain, laid the donated paper on the studio floor. It covered at least 500 square feet--her goal was, using brush

and ink, to study the evolution of a mark-like-calligraphy. The resulting images where phenomenally intriguing—they were conceptually minimal, clear, and beautiful. Julian Schnabel, a visiting artist at the time, admired Vasquez work, and a highly personal and intellectual dialogue ensued.

Besides helping Eric and Barbara run the CAC, I took advantage of the studio spaces and equipment to produce some new work of my own.

The large studios and the artists contributed to a very special creative atmosphere.

Our guest speakers were world class in their own fields, Tom Krens, Joe Thompson, Kirk Varnedoe (of the Museum of Modern Art), Jenny Holzer, and more.

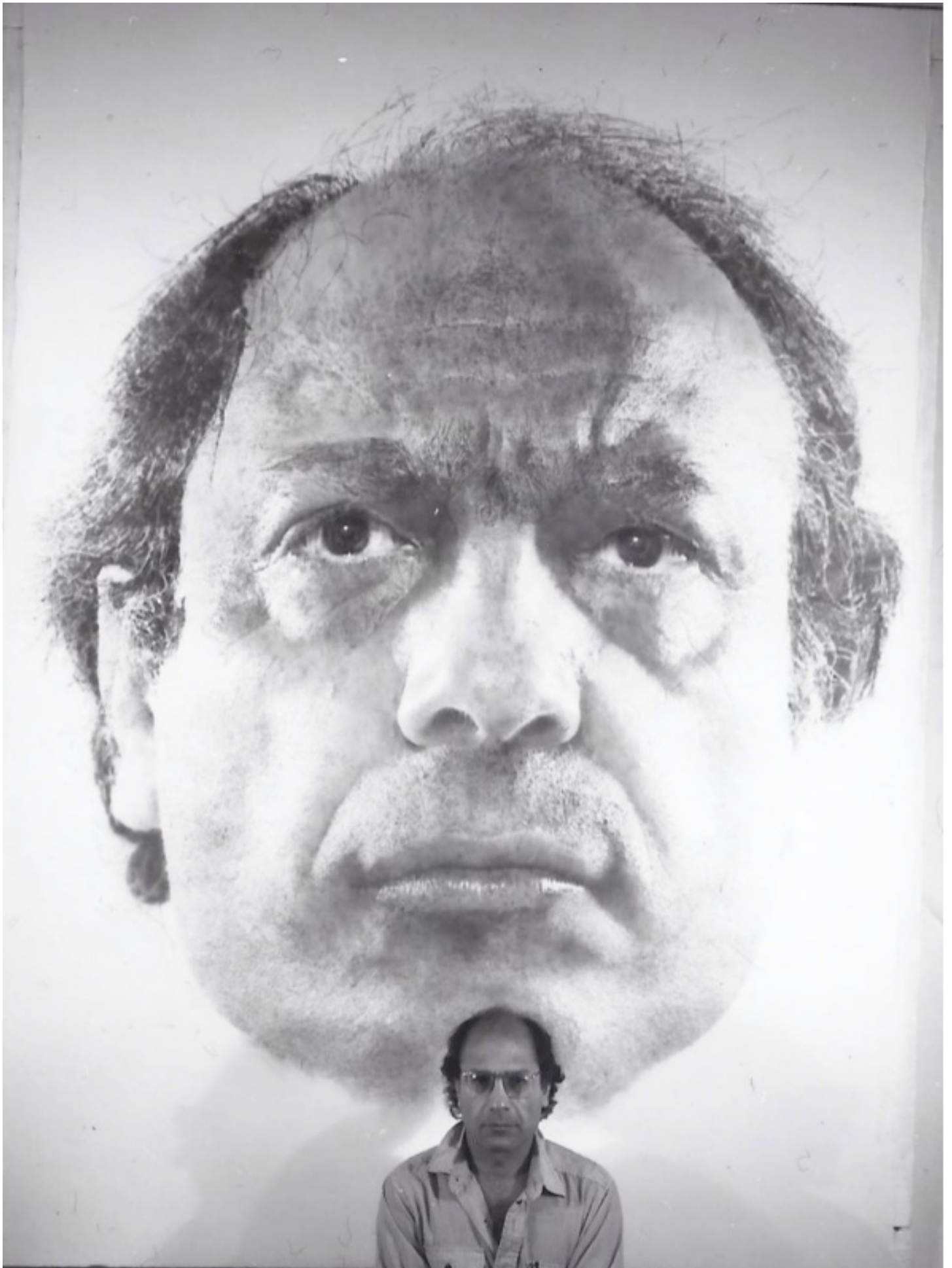
When MASS MoCA was only an idea on the drawing board, Joe Thompson came to the CAC and described to the attending artists the concept for this new museum. He then took us on a tour of the empty MASS MoCA complex and through the industrial-sized spaces that are now the large galleries of the museum.

In addition to visiting the attending artists, Tom Krens helped the CAC in other ways, for instance, he juried our first gallery show, and created a CAC-Guggenheim scholarship. He not only visited us a number of times and often included talks, he also donated a large silkscreen press.

The CAC was a place where artists felt free to explore their creative potentials. There were events on the riverbank featuring rock sculptor Rob Logan who at dusk lit torches in the water creating a mesmerizing ambiance. In most of the 90s, the storefronts in North Adams were empty, so it was a natural thing for the CAC to fill those shop windows with artworks. One memorable show that transformed downtown North Adams had been created by a group of artists from Boston. Some artists came back again and again, in particular Robert Henríquez and Charles Giuliano; they became friends and elected to stay in the Berkshires.

David Zaig ---2016





J. M. Robert Henriquez

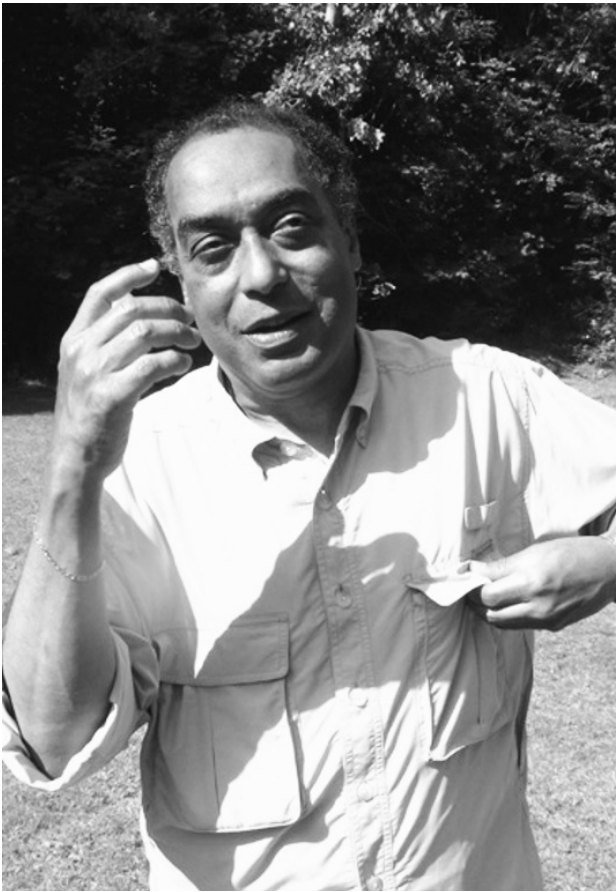


Photo by Charles Giuliano

Remembering and Resurrecting the CAC Years (1990—1999)

By J. M. Robert Henriquez

“... I would rather be a cyborg than Vincent Van Gogh!”
Mon cri de guerre ... JMRH

In the spring of 1990, an architect friend of mine handed me a clipping from the classified section of the NY Times. It was an advertisement for the newly conceived Contemporary Artists Center in the City of North Adams, located in the northern part of Berkshire County, in west-

ern Massachusetts. For a diehard New Yorker like me, this strange geography was a blessing; it's off the beaten path and there I would get a chance to focus on my art.

First, I decided to check out this place. I needed a bigger studio space to work on large canvasses. I was the first artist to make the trip to North Adams to take a critical look at the Beaver Mill. There I met Eric Rudd and Martin Hatcher. We discussed the concept and how the CAC would help serious artists. By the end of the meeting, I had high ex-

pectations for the place.

Although MASS MoCA dominated the scene, the CAC survived and strived for over a decade. Artists from all over the world attended and participated in creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and creativity. I remember with fondness the first year of the first season. How strange it was to take part in the conception of something so cool—a seminal success of how the CAC would evolve in the coming years.

I attended every season after that, and developed long lasting friendships with Barbara and Eric Rudd, David Zaig, Glenn English, Henry

Klein, Maria Siskind, and other artists of different ilk. Later on my wife Lisa Avery and I developed close friendships with Astrid Heimer and Charles Giuliano. Needless to say, the CAC played an important role in developing a creative environment for strong artists in Northern Berkshire.

One of the great attractions for participating in the CAC summer programs was the high quality and long list of visiting art dignitaries, from museum directors, to blue-chip artists, to gallery owners. Here are some of the memorable visits that strongly influenced my own approach to art—Kirk Varnedoe (MOMA), Lynne Cooke (Dia), and Jenny Holzer (conceptual artist) to name a few. Other influences came from the feminist branch of a generation of artists and critical thinkers that emerged around 1980, notably Barbara Kruger, Avital Ronell, and Donna Haraway.

By far the most influential visiting dignitaries who changed the aesthetic trajectory of my art were the NYC art power couple of Ivan Karp and Marilynn Gelfman Karp. Their visit to the CAC was an absolute success. Informed of Ivan's predilection for fine foods and wine, the Rudds put me in charge of wine selection as sommelier for the mandatory dinner. Karp was so delighted with my choices that he demanded further contact back in the city. They visited my studio in DUMBO, and we had many encounters tasting fine wine, smoking authentic Habana cigars, as well as my first New

York show. More importantly, Karp gave me access to his wide artistic erudition.

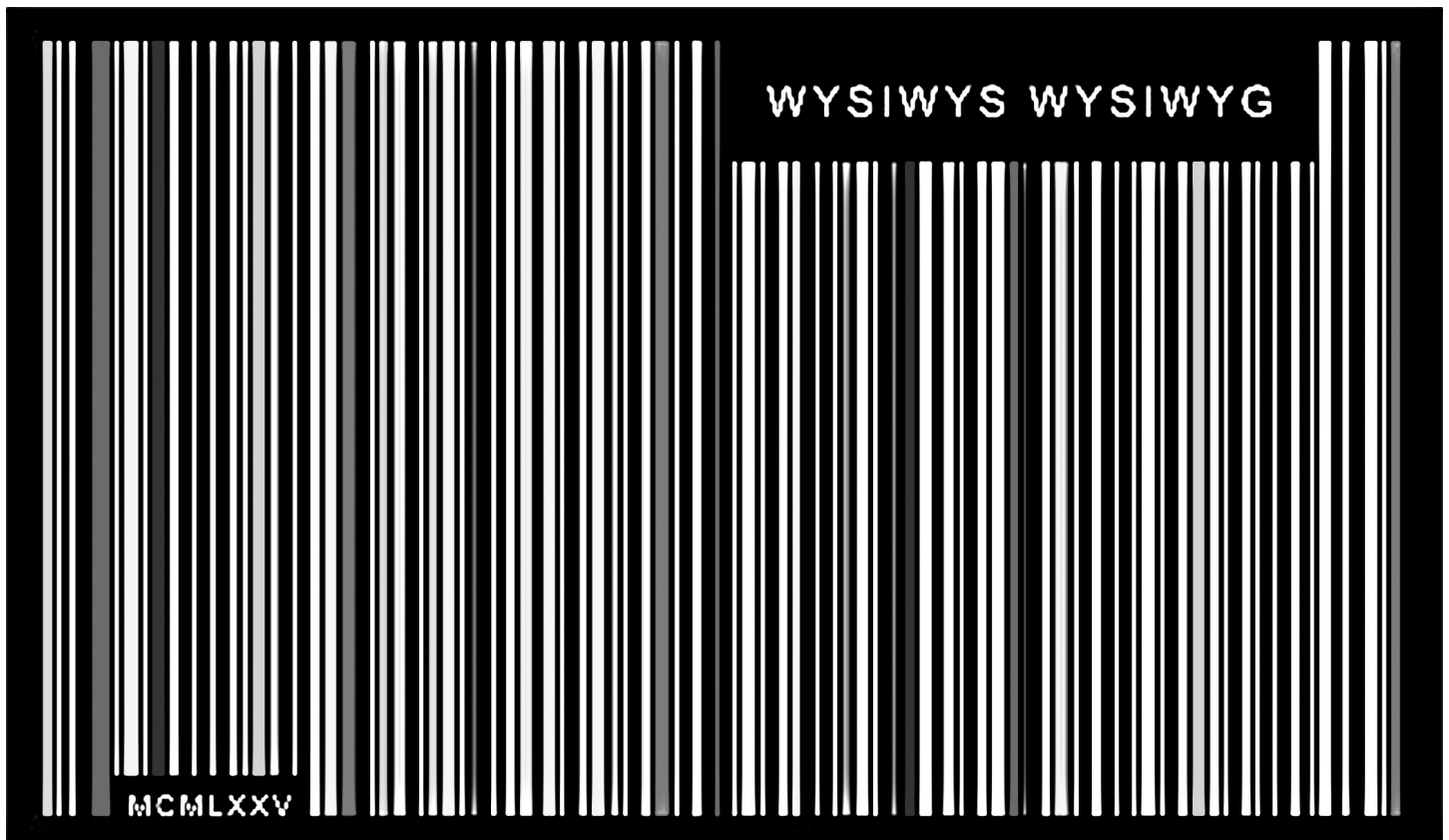
By that time, I was already making a transition from abstract painting to a neo-conceptual artistic practice that uses digital technology as an essential part of the creative or presentation process. I was looking for new ways to make narrative or textual commentary an implicit part of visual objects.

Back in the 1970s, I began to formulate a concept to pictorialize the ubiquitous UPC-barcode iconography as a potential aesthetic for a different text-based art. My barcodes, QR-codes, and Aztec-codes are real and scannable. I gave them size, form, and color. The idea and its processes proved to be difficult. To achieve that, I had to have total

control over the symbology, and the entire algorithmic process to make it so. That took a long time and difficult work to succeed. During my time at the CAC I could only inflate the size, but now, with new technology, I have control over the entire process.

Ivan Karp was instrumental in my decision to reformulate the aesthetic concept of the UPC iconography. I gladly give credit to the CAC for initiating his visit, which played a pivotal role in the evolution of my work.

J. M. Robert Henriquez, 2016



Dale Bradley

Role at the CAC

Excerpts taken from a 1992 Brochure and newsletter talking about the previous sessions and the CAC's upcoming 1993 season:

PRINTMAKING: Dale Bradley was making prints in the Beaver Mill well before Eric had even heard of the Beaver Mill or North Adams. When the Center opened in the summer of 1990, Dale offered to open his own studio for the use of any attending artists that might be

interested in printmaking. Printing had not been advertised and none of the artists came intending to print; yet, within a short time, fully half of them had taken over Dale's studio and to their own surprise were making prints in addition to painting or sculpture. Clearly, Dale's skill as a teacher, his unconventional approach to printmaking, and his well-equipped studio were a hit. What had merely been a one time workshop had become an integral part of the Center.

NEWSLETTER

Those of you who attended the center in 1990 showed such an interest in printmaking that we offered a printmaking workshop in 1991 and added several new presses. Our biggest effort and biggest risk was building a huge hydraulic flatbed press to make prints with an image size of up to 4'x8'. It was designed by Dale (when Eric asked him near the end of construction whether it would work or not he replied that he had "no idea") and constructed





by him with assistance from Martin. The 20 top and bottom beams were built from rail donated by Boston and Maine Railroad. Unfortunately, though the steel is high quality and strong, it is almost impossible to weld, so the press had to be bolted together (the rails turned out to be just as hard to drill as they were to weld). After months of drilling, grinding, welding, sweating and cursing, we finished it a day before the first artist arrived for printmaking. Dale made a 4'x8' mono-print that day in less than half an hour and has not had time to print any more to date. The press requires at least

two people to run it and the more people to pump it up the better, but it works great. The general manager of Tyler Press (they do the prints for Rauschenberg, Stella, Rosenquist, etc.) visited and thought it, in some ways, superior to the design of their own large press. Dale has not stopped tinkering with it and an easier way for getting the plates in and out of the press is on the drawing boards. He is also gathering the materials needed to automate the hydraulics, although when he does we won't be able to refer to us as the "Contemporary Artists Center and Fitness Spa" anymore.



Brandon Graving

Contemporary Artists Center: Residency

I came from New Orleans to attend the second residency held at the CAC and it was an amazing experience! At the end of that three week session, I had made some life-long friends, a California collector had purchased many of the large monoprints that I had just made, Tom Krens had complimented my work, and the CAC staff had invited me to become a part of it all here! Over time, I became the Gallery Director, curated many exhibits and also conducted countless print workshops eventually becoming Master Printmaker with my own shop.

Some of my fondest memories of those early years of CAC are of leaning in to hear the eloquent Walter Hopps, dressed in a canary yellow suit, discuss a slice of Art history over lunch, or escorting Elizabeth Murray through the residents studios as she generously dealt out insightful jewels and warm encouragement to the Artists.

The monoprint *Dance on a Blue Stage* included in this exhibition, was made during particularly exciting times at the CAC and reflects the emotional choreography of ego's at this international residency program. This unique print, richly inky, deeply embossed and saturated with colour, is a sister print to *Echo* which is in the collection of The New Orleans Museum of Art and was near the beginning of some of the works for which I'm best known.

Artist Brandon Graving is a sculptor and master printmaker best known for her large scale richly textured embossed monoprint installations and the extremely innovative techniques she has invented to create them. Graving's 10.5 foot by 32 foot monoprint *Ephemera: River with Flowers* is the largest monoprint ever made by a single artist and was featured at the New Orleans Museum of Art when the city was struck by hurricane Katrina. Purchased by the Frederick R. Weisman Collection, this multi-faceted installation has recently been mounted in more than a dozen museums nationally.

Graving captures the immediacy of a single chemical "snap shot" in her monoprints. Articulated by liquid inks covering her elaborate, textured printing matrix; these plates are usually inked for three days before being pushed into paper with the pressure of the press. She says of her process, "I love the sensitivity of a wet piece of paper which perfectly records the wild and varied objects and ink viscosity, allowing saturation deep into this paper or thick reticulated ink poised on it's surface. That moment when the chemistry is caught and transfixed into this sculptural monoprint then al-

lows me to share my excitement".

Graving's work is in numerous private and public collections including the New Orleans Museum of Art and she has received many prestigious grants and awards including the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Award. A few years ago, Graving consolidated her print studios to become Gravity Press Experimental Print Shop and has been working for the last three years on a project with Stephen Hannock and Sting that will open at Marlborough Gallery New York this October, 2016.





Barbara May

Summer of the CAC

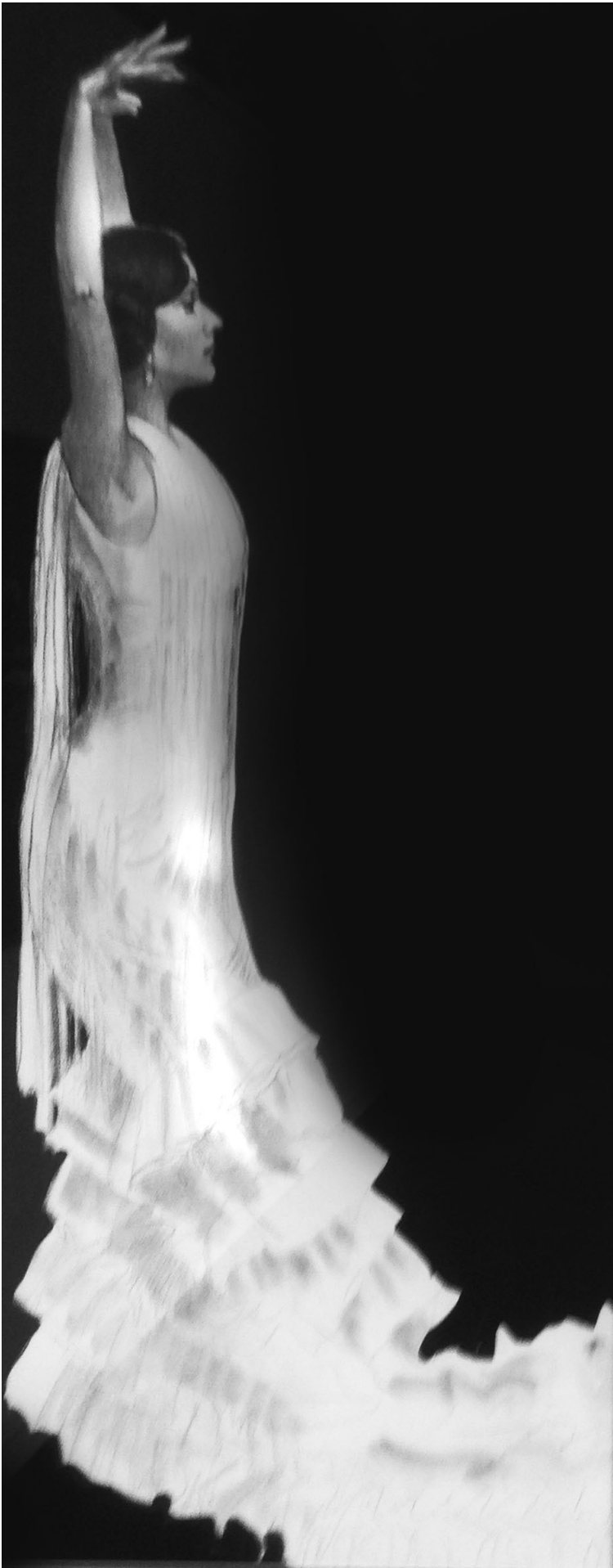
In the summer of 1992 I was invited to attend Eric and Barbara Rudd's Contemporary Artists Center.

Out of the ruins of the mostly abandoned Beaver Mill in North Adams, they fashioned something new. They and their dedicated team of friends transformed the dusty old manufacturing spaces into large studios, created a dormitory and a beautiful dining room and lecture hall, made a kitchen and hired a chef, built a ground floor gallery and just all around worked magic.

The formerly sad and derelict space now hummed with activity, filled with art and artists from around the area, the country and the world. I remember a talk by Jenny Holzer about her work, and listened to the amazing and erudite Walter Hopps on the history and future of art. Julian Schnabel ambled through. Rodney Ripps gave critiques.

I walked over every morning from my nearby house, waved goodbye to husband and kids, and immersed myself in this new world. I studied printmaking with master printmaker and wonderful teacher Dale Bradley, a great experience I'll never forget. I was lucky enough to meet the other artists represented in this show, being for a brief while surrounded by creative minds, each so unique and gifted. What a great time!





Maria Siskind

Group of sculptures, paper-mache, circa early/mid 1990s

I had the fortune of having my art studio in the Beaver Mill during Eric Rudd's years as the director the Contemporary Artists Center. I did three artist residencies at the CAC, and a number of work exchanges. The CAC was lively with many well-known artists and curators visiting the center and touring the area. The

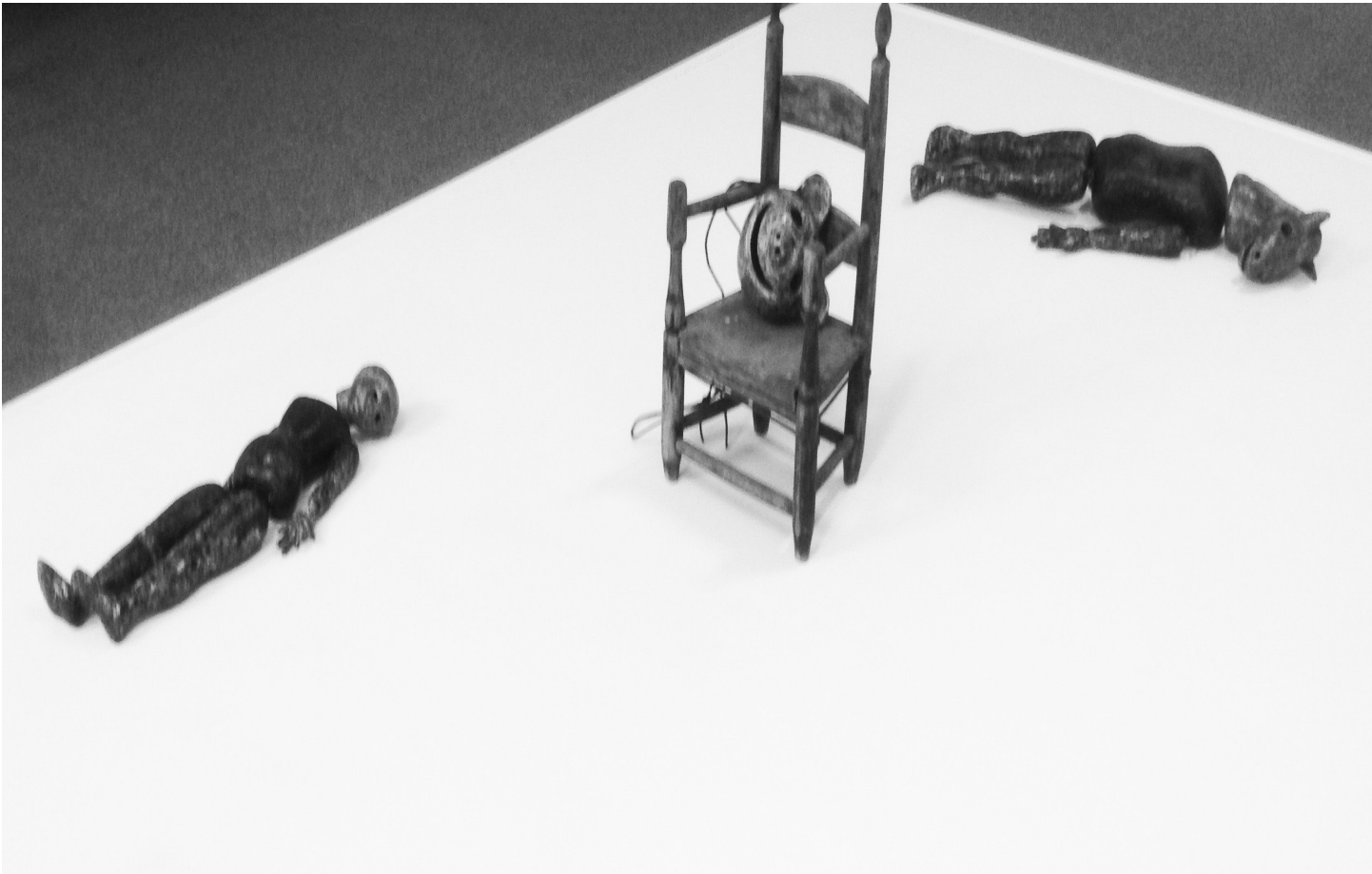
ing, with vast post industrial loft floors to work on, and the chance to meet and exchange ideas with so many artists all having different art making practices.

This was when Mass MoCA was still a long neglected factory with magical buckling floors and flaking paint.

I made these sculptures around time; the theme was puppets and doll parts. I've always loved finding

cially old dolls and puppets. These sculptures are all made using classic paper-mache. Most of these were made to hang from walls or ceilings, but I like seeing them in this new perspective years later.





Henry Ekman Klein

Ahead of the Curve

Rare People make
Rare Spaces that make
Rare Objects.

I came into contact with the CAC
Summer of 1991.

I had just graduated with a fresh,
shining Associate in Science Degree
in the field of graphic design from
Northwestern Connecticut Com-
munity College in the town of Win-
sted, CT, nestled in the foothills of
the Berkshires, marking my early
step in my march northward.

With NWCCC's \$80.00 classes, I
was able to attend drawing, painting
and design classes with professors

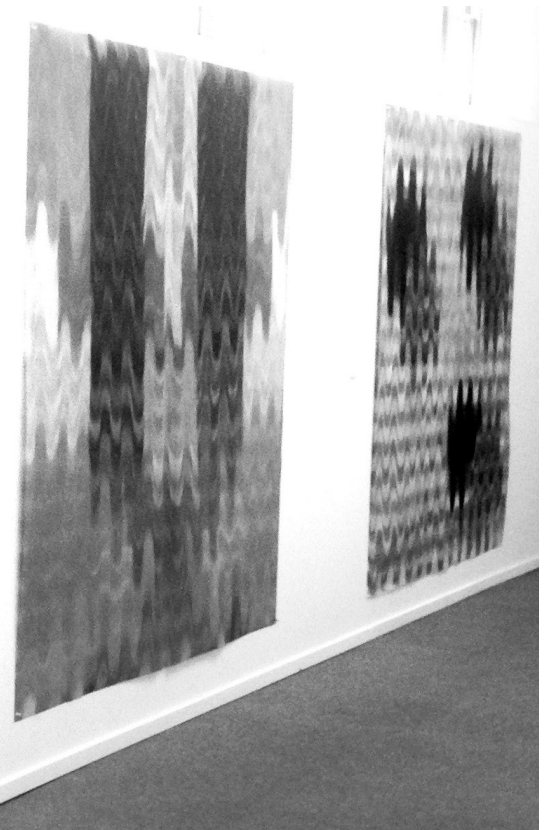
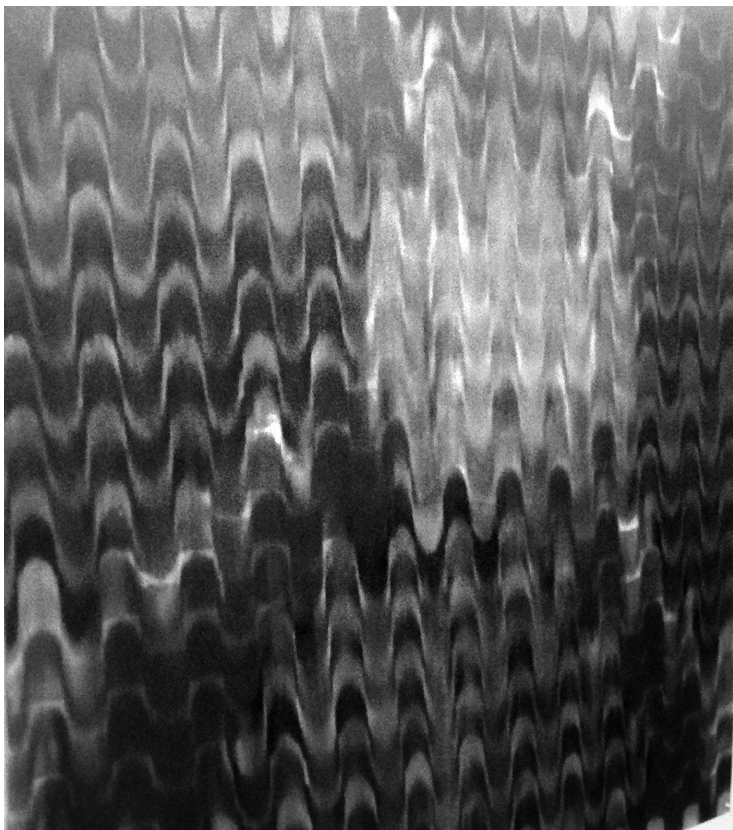
fresh from Yale, with whom I still
with speak today.

I entered jurried shows, I was hit-
ting NYC hard with solo shows, one
of which was at the Knitting Facto-
ry where the band They Might Be
Giants played in front of my work,
kinda neat...

Then, seemingly part of my usual
routine, I sent in my slides and en-
tered the competition at the CAC
with jurors like Shearer, Krens and
Thompson! "Wow"!

I got in the show and now I was on
my way northward, deeper into the
Berkshires....

I framed up my pieces, wired them,
loved them. After all this care I
commenced shoving them in the
exactly 48 inch wide hatch of my
trusty 1977, mostly copper colored
Honda Accord. With the rear seats
folded down, the front seats pushed
up I skinned my left knee every
time I had to shift. Firrrrrst "ouch"
seconnnnnnd "Ouch" Thirrrrrrd
"ouch" fourrrrrrrth... and on and
on, up and up, winding up route 8.
I went to the gallery opening at the
CAC for the juried show, met peo-
ple. That evening I quickly sold
my painting to a great couple that
flipped all their abstract expression-
ist collection to buy new work, noth-
ing short of amazing and rare... The
piece resides in NYC in their son's



building in Upper West Side.

It was at the opening where I learned of the residency program. I could attend the Center? I took a tour, smelled the old wood beams, saw the cavernous spaces and natural settings. I was sold.

This brief introduction of my early involvement with the CAC sets the pace for what I call Discovery of Rare People and how life is truly fascinating. These relationships with rare people are just like gems you find behind glass cases, see them sparkle and radiate and see their effects on the people and world around you.

The CAC was ahead of Mass MoCA, introducing and pulling artists young and old into the Northern Berkshires, well I will say maybe

reviving the connection between the artist and these Hills. Poets like Hawthorne and Hudson River school artists stomped around here too.

The pre-MOCA CAC era was ahead of the curve of the cultural magnifying glass (Or magnifying class?, big curators, big grants, big donations, big people, at least publicly...). This window, this fraction of a second of the “before” was fleeting. The new artists attending the CAC’s programs and new staff fun activities and dining together were great moments. These tiny slivers of events were all banded together into a decade or so chunk of the rare “Before Time”...

This time of “proto”, a time of “remember when”, was book ended with Eric Rudd looking at mills for

the “Industrial Strength Art Space” and now in the “MoCA Times”. This was an era of “let’s see what happens” the time of “personality alchemy” and great feats and great trials.

But now what do we have? Well, take a look at the rare things made by rare people at a rare time.

All of which, in my modest assessment, are priceless gems in a special case on a pedestal with special aimed lights of the correct candlepower. A jewel case that I got to be in. Every second of that rare time I hold in a special place.

Henry Ekman Klein



Robert Schechter

Biography

Lives and works in Manhattan, NY and Lenox, MA

Education

Bachelor of Science. New York University
MFA Painting and Art History. Hunter College

Solo Exhibitions

- Ward Nasse Gallery, twice. New York
- Automation House. New York
- Rye Library.
- Pardo Gallery, Chelsea. New York
- Broome St. Gallery, Soho. New York
- Soho Center for Visual Artist. Formally part of Aldrich Museum. New York
- Beaver Gallery 2007. North Adams, MA

- Good Purpose Gallery. Lee, MA 2012
- Good Purpose Gallery. Lee, MA 2015

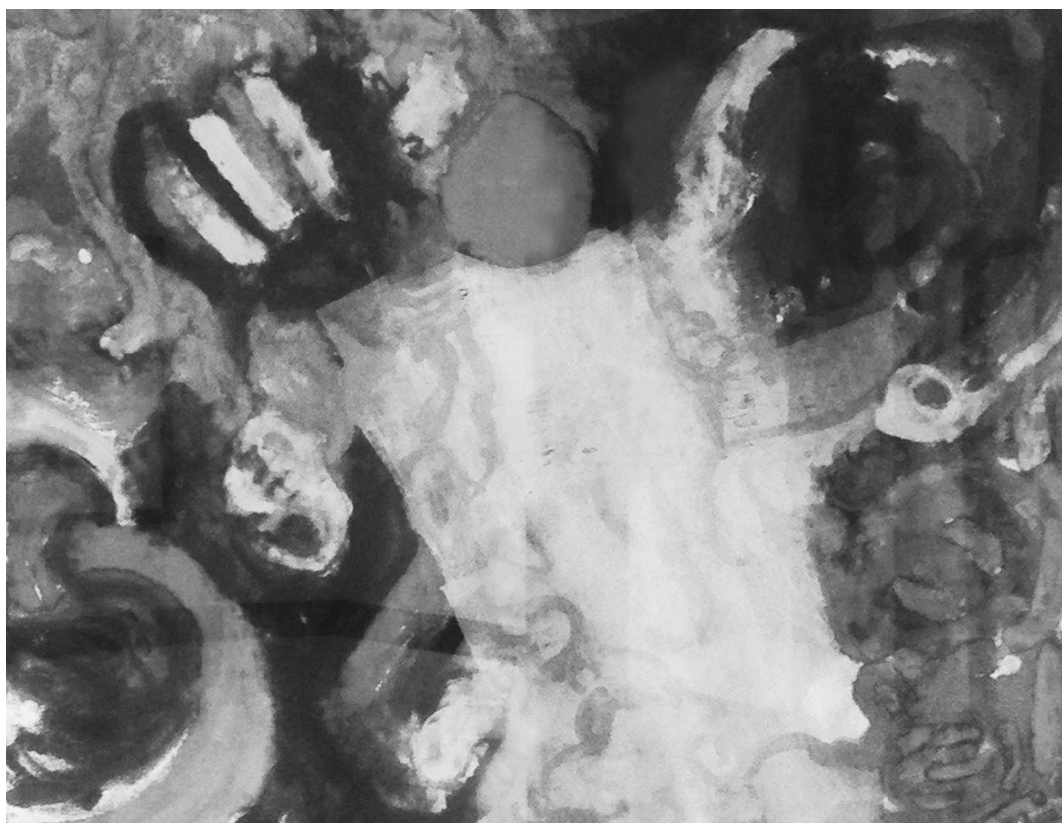
Group Exhibitions

- Cultural Council Lower Manhattan. New York
- Fig Gallery. North Adams, MA.
- SOHO 20, Small Works 2004 and 2005. New York
- Contemporary Artists Center, North Adams, MA. Last in 2006 and two previous exhibits.
- Print Show New Jersey Council of the Arts 2005, Competition.
- Smithtown Arts Council 2006: Competition Juror Colta Ives (Curator of print and drawings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art).
- Exhibition "Contemporary Sculpture at Chesterwood 2012", Chesterwood, Stockbridge, MA.

- Group Show "Idols and Icons", New Marlborough Meeting House Gallery, New Marlborough MA
- Group Show "40: The Anniversary Exhibition", Hal Bromm Gallery, NY

Public Collections

- 75 works are on permanent display in New York City- Columbia Presbyterian, NYC Cornell, Beth Israel, Alan Pavilion.
- 2 large monoprints made on Monster Press, North Adams, at the entrance of Berkshire Medical Arts Building, Pittsfield, MA.
- 1 large sculpture, 16 x 11 feet, made of Wood and Ceramic is on permanent display in Shakespear & Company in Lenox, Mass





Chris Gillooly

SPRAGUE ELECTRIC COMPANY

NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS

ROBERT C. SPRAGUE
HONORARY CHAIRMAN
DIRECTOR

August 29, 1984

Mr. Christopher J. Gillooly
P. O. Box 323
North Adams, MA 01247

Dear Mr. Gillooly:

It was most gracious and thoughtful of you to send me a copy of your delightful photograph portfolio "As I See It".


I also appreciate your sending me a copy of the article concerning it which appeared in the August 11, 1984 issue of the North Adams Transcript. I had read the article the day it appeared in the Transcript and I was most interested in it. In fact, I had intended to order a copy of the portfolio when it was available through the local book stores.

Mrs. Sprague and I very much enjoyed looking at and studying all the excellent photographs included, with their amusing titles.

We agree that you have great talent and hope that your portfolio gains large and well-earned distribution.

Congratulations and warmest best wishes.

Cordially,


Robert C. Sprague

RCS/sjl

MASSACHUSETTS MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

15 February 1989

Chris Gillooly
63 Natural Bridge Road
North Adams, MA 01247

Dear Chris:

I think that, when we had lunch at McKinley's, neither of us realized what we were in for! You moved mountains, Chris, and the executive planning group is extremely grateful. I really don't know where to begin to thank you for all you did on the Warehouse Ball, for there is no doubt in my mind that we couldn't have pulled it off without your help. You were always there -- with time, energy and good cheer -- and I'm deeply grateful. I will never forget the moment when we decided to move the ball from the third to the second floor, and -- after blanching for a moment -- you very professionally said, "Okay, let's do it." In that one statement you showed a wonderful professionalism and commitment to a task, not to mention an extraordinary spirit. Thank you for all that you did on the ball.

Fondly,



Jennifer Trainer
Director of Development
and Public Relations

87 Marshall Street
North Adams, Massachusetts 01247
Telephone 413-664-4481 • Telefax 413-663-8548

MASSACHUSETTS MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

August 1, 1991

Mr. Christopher Gillooly
Natural Bridge Road
North Adams, MA 01246

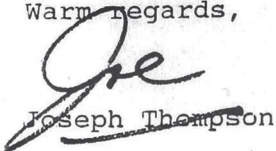
Dear Chris:

I will remember certain scenes and details of the Courtyard Dance forever, and many of those were your creations, for which I would like to thank you again. In particular, your use and redesign of "found factory furniture" set a tone and style that helped make the event truly unique and meaningful. Many were captivated by the capacitor tables and Clocktower Bar, though for me, the slate tables you and Carol designed and pressed into service on the last day of preparations will always stand out for their compelling scale, material character and sheer drama. Those tables were an elegant design gesture that deserve to be a permanent part of whatever it is that MASS MoCA may become.

I also cannot thank you enough for the sheer time and energy you poured into this venture over the past five weeks. While the Courtyard Dance would no doubt have been a much less compelling event without your aesthetic sense and guiding design hand, I can also say that it would not have happened at all without your hard work and creative use of available tools and materials, and your careful management of volunteer labor.

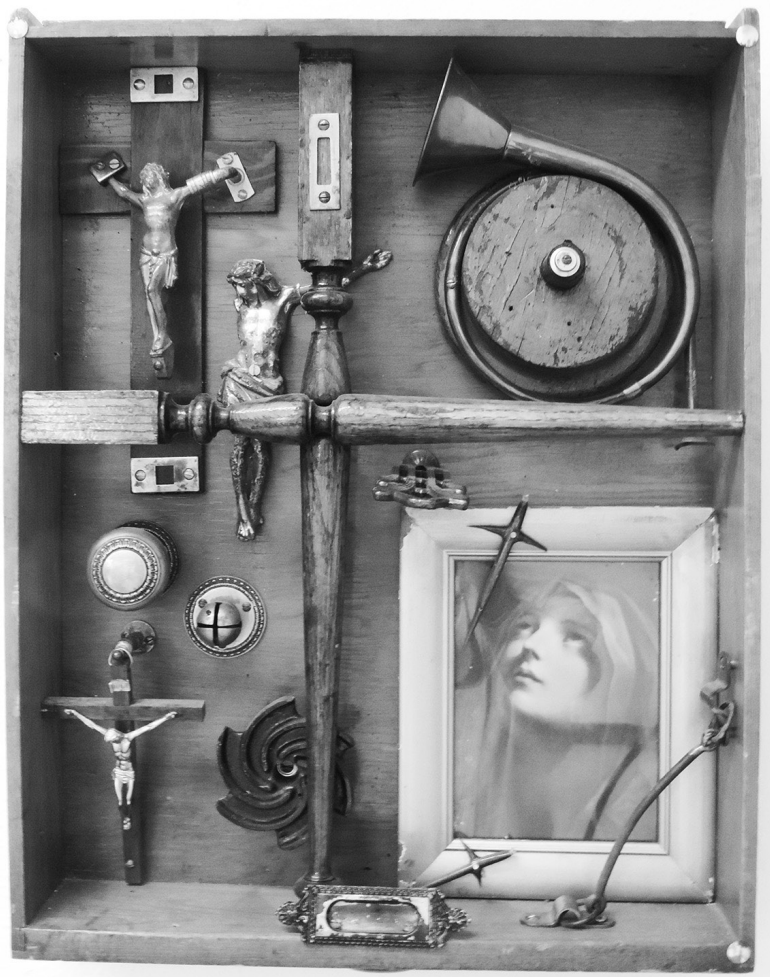
It was a great night, and I was honored to be able to work with you and all those who together made it great.

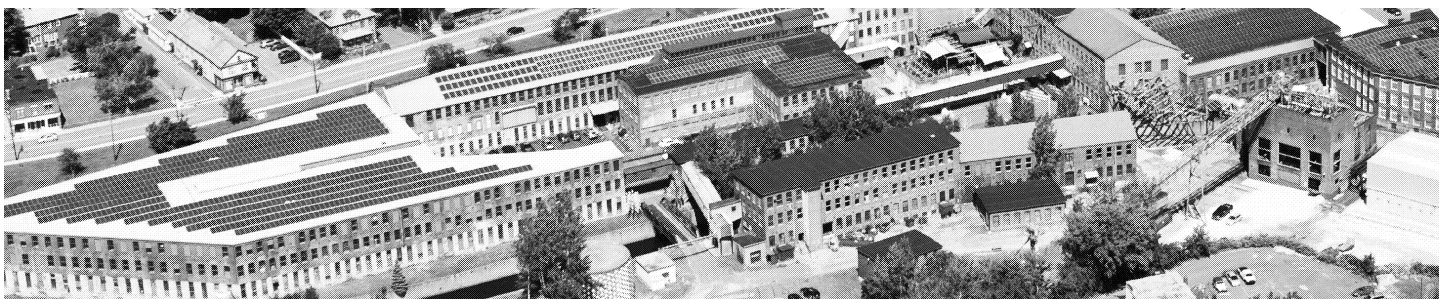
Warm regards,



Joseph Thompson

PS. Please accept the check enclosed as an honorarium for your design and management services. It is clearly only a token payment, and I sincerely wish that the project could reimburse you more fully for your time and energy, which I value quite highly. In the meantime, we all appreciate your contributions towards MASS MoCA, and look forward to the next event, whatever that may be.





Essay by Joseph Thompson - Director | MASS MoCA

Like farming, when it comes to art, culture, and community-building, the fields have to be plowed over and over again.

At the formative stage of MASS MoCA, many of our neighbors in North Adams pinned impossible hopes onto this dreamy, impossibly large endeavor – and more generally onto the transformative power of art and creativity to resuscitate an entire regional economy. At the same time, others projected their fear of change – their fear of losing the community they knew and loved – onto MASS MoCA and onto the artists and visitors it promised to attract to North Adams. In 1989, I visited a local watering hole with two French artists clad head to toe in black leather. There was no mistaking this pair for Harley riders, and, after serving us one round of beer, the bartender looked me in the eye and quietly said, “and that will be your last, because we don’t want you to get the impression that this is a friendly kind of place.” That was, of course, exceptional – North Adams actually is a friendly kind of place – but it was indicative of something.

The CAC plowed fields all over town.

While MASS MoCA was moving mountains to get art, real estate, and money all in the same place at the same time, Eric Rudd and his colleagues at CAC mounted excellent exhibitions, hosted artists’ talks, had parties, and in general infiltrated almost every nook and cranny of North Adams and the surrounding hill towns. Suddenly, gallery openings were no longer a new phenomena. Art in storefront windows became less strange. Running into artists while waiting in line to check out at the Big Y supermarket was not so uncommon.

The plowing of the fields took the following form:

- 154 exhibitions over 16 years
- 1,750 artists-in-residence, many of whom lived among us in North Adams for weeks and months at a time.
- Over 500 public events, parties, and downtown celebrations, to say nothing of the informal lectures, readings, and concerts that made CAC such a lively source of energy within our community.

All that matters. It is hard for me to imagine opening MASS MoCA without the sometimes heroic, sometimes impenetrable, often delightful work of the CAC having gone on before (and during). And one more thing: culture needs counterculture to thrive. Every large institution needs nimble, grassroots institutions to surround it, challenge it, reinforce it, complement it, and compete – intellectually, at least – against it. The CAC did all that and more, including providing a steady stream of talented, hard-working, creative collaborators, without which life in the cultural fields of North Adams would have been barren indeed. While the arts can have dramatic, lightning bolt-like effects on our individual minds and souls, when it comes to shape-shifting an entire community, and enlivening entire regional economies, the effects are more generational in pace. The CAC, luckily for those of us who have lived and worked in Northern Berkshire County, was a generational project, plowing in our midst for nearly 20 years.



Joe Thompson giving CAC artists a rooftop tour of the future museum project. 1991

Joe Thompson, Director of the Massachusetts Museum of Art, was on the board of the Contemporary Artists Center during its early years. Among his contributions, he helped to craft the CAC's mission statement.

The CAC's mission statement:

To provide a unique environment for the creation of contemporary art and its exhibition.

1. Utilizing some of the vast mil space that, as a legacy of the industrial Revolution, is available throughout North Adams, to create a physical environment conducive to the making of art.
2. To supply the physical and technical resources necessary for the production of art.
3. To encourage creative diversity and the generation and dissemination of ideas.
4. To invite convocations of artists and others from the international art world to promote a lively exchange of ideas.
5. To foster an appreciation of contemporary art through educational programs, exhibitions, and multi-media events.
6. To publish and document the activities of the Contemporary Artists Center.
7. To integrate the programs of the Contemporary Artists Center into the community.

A PERSONAL HISTORY OF THE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

BY FOUNDING DIRECTOR ERIC RUDD

Barbara and I decided to move from Washington D.C. to North Adams, Massachusetts back in 1988. I had been invited by G.E. Plastics to use their blow-molding equipment for my sculptures, discovered the Berkshires and found a gigantic mill that was almost being given away. At the time, our first thought was that the mill could serve as a summer studio, but as I got more involved, learned about MASS MoCA (although it was just in its embryonic stage) and saw the depth of such nearby institutions as the Clark Art Institute and Williams College Museum of Art, the idea of moving lock stock and barrel proved attractive.

In those days, North Adams seemed very bleak. Its main employer, Sprague Electric, had closed several years early, leaving 4,000 people unemployed. The population dropped from 22,000 to fewer than 14,000, and Main Street was at least 70% vacant. However, North Adams offered cheap real estate, which I desperately needed, and I was an optimist - I sensed the impact that MASS MoCA could have. As my backup rationale, even if MASS MoCA ended up not getting off the ground, the Clark Art and Williams College were only fifteen minutes away and would give me ample culture. Finally, I thought if the MoCA project tanked, perhaps I could come up with a use for 800,000 square feet for a lot less than was being sought from the state to build what was then promoted as the world's largest museum for contemporary art.

Although I bluffed and said I would purchase the historic Beaver Mill, with an impressive 130,000 square feet, I actually had little cash to do so. However, as luck would turn out, because of legal complications associated with the ownership of the mill (which had been donated to a not-for-profit group that had then attained federal grants to renovate the mill) it took two years of negotiations during which time we were able to sell our house in Washington D.C.

The mill introduced me to the world of hazardous waste issues and small town politics, and I got involved with taming a run-down huge brick factory building with lots of issues. Then too, when the last occupant of the mill had exited (in the middle of the night), it abandoned tons of fabric stuffing and textile materials, as well as hundreds of tables and industrial debris. Some of that fabric we saved and countless artists ended up utilizing the scraps for art projects in the succeeding years, although the treated canvas gave off a distinctive odor.

By late 1989 and early 1990, some light at the end of the tunnel was in sight as a local group of workers made basic renovations to the mill. Barbara and I often drove the seven hours between Washington D.C. and North Adams to supervise the work. On one of those many trips, as we discussed how our lives might change by moving from a large city with an active cultural scene to a de-

pressed blue-collar town in a rural area, Barbara suggested that maybe we could start some sort of art center/school, capturing the feeling of an international school that I had attended for two summers in Salzburg, Austria in the mid 60s and had often told Barbara about. That was the birth of the Contemporary Artists Center, although to give it some legitimacy from the get-go and because zoning issues are much easier with a school, we incorporated as the not-for-profit (501c3) Berkshire School of Contemporary Art. By the end of the first summer, we were calling it the Contemporary Artists Center.

Although I had the largest studio in Washington D.C., using 14,000 square feet in an old warehouse building that I had purchased in 1978 for a song, it was so filled with my art that I could not create more art without disposing of part of what was there. Moving to a gigantic mill would allow me ample space to store work as well as to pursue new ambitious art ideas.

As owner of the D.C. warehouse, I had served as janitor, leasing agent, superintendent and fixer of any problem. To help pay for the operational end of the large building, I had divided half the building into studios and filled them with artist-tenants. One of the tenants was Martin Hatcher who rented a small sculpture studio. When he heard that I was moving to North Adams and wanted to start an art center,

he asked if he and his wife, Mardi Crawford, could join in the adventure. I insisted that he at least visit the mill and the scene before committing, which he did and upon seeing the poor shape of the mill, almost changed his mind.

I have little patience (so I'm told) and I didn't want to wait a full year to test out my theory about the art center. With Martin's help in designing a brochure and ad, I advertised in a few art publications and placed a tiny ad in the New York Times-- stating that we were offering a three-week summer session for developing artists and that we had invited some museum directors and distinguished artists to come and interact. I had many contacts and my close friend, museum director Walter Hopps, had agreed to visit during the summer and said he'd bring along famous artist Robert Rauschenberg.

When I look today at that very first simple brochure made in 1989, I'm a bit taken back by the audacity I had in making it seem like we had been operating from many years, instead of plainly stating that this was a start-up adventure. I suppose my enthusiastic optimism overcame any practical doubts; that was a good thing, because the CAC proved successful despite all the obstacles.

Meanwhile, I was still commuting to North Adams almost weekly and staying two nights so I could supervise the repairs and repurposing of the mill into an art center, studios and lofts. To save motel expenses, I had decided to camp out at the mill, using a sleeping bag in a former office and using a temporary shower with a one-gallon hot water heater

that I had installed in one of the many bathrooms. There was something quite scary about being the only person at night in an old factory building the size of an ocean-liner and hearing strange noises. But each morning at seven, a group of workers would show up and I was back at work.

We were basically clearing large spaces in which artists could work, renovating a small floor for kitchen, dining and four bedroom spaces, and carving out temporary spaces for staff. The deadline was fast approaching as we filled 46 of the largest-sized dumpsters with debris. At the same time, I was putting some effort into our personal loft space (which would be completed after the CAC spaces were done) and organizing my private studio floors. The move to North Adams would likely give me the largest individual art studio in the United States and would take seven tractor-trailers to bring up my art and equipment.

As we were edging closer to finishing the space to accommodate 19 artists who had responded to my ads and notices, one artist decided to drive up from New York City to check us out. I was a bit embarrassed as the spaces looked rather

rough, to say the least, but we passed his inspection and he returned for our first summer session. He was Robert Henriquez who repeated his visits and became a friend, CAC resident artist and eventually a full-time Berkshire resident (and is included in the exhibition).

This was a new venture for me, not only to run an art center, but also to house and feed all the artists and staff. At a minimum, there were Barbara and me, Martin and his wife Mardi, artist David Zaig (a close friend who I met in London many years earlier and had helped when he first migrated to the United States before landing a teaching job at a college in Wisconsin; years later, when we moved to North Adams, he was living and working in Boston, so David came each summer as the "resident artist" for the CAC). Daily, at least a one or more staff members would join us in the "wheel house" dining room. That's a half dozen, plus the attending artists, plus invited guests and invited museum and gallery directors and renowned artists who came for one to three days to interact with the attending artists.

Basically, we provided breakfast, lunch and dinner for up to 30 folks



(and more than 40 in succeeding years). Barbara and I had a friend in Washington D.C., Cecily Abram, who loved to give dinner parties for up to 15 people. I suggested that she might enjoy a month in the Berkshires and "oh, by the way, would she be our chef?" All she had to do, I suggested, was "double her recipes. Well, she came and it worked, but it sure involved a lot more effort than doubling recipes. That first summer, we were well fed and the dining room became the place for energizing conversation and memorable after-dinner talks by invited guests.

I might mention that I was working my tail off, all on a pro-bono basis, but it energized the mill, energized our move to North Adams, and as history proved, the CAC was instrumental in establishing North Adams as a vital art destination. One museum does a lot, but hundreds of artists with all their activities increase the vitality substantially.

I will also state that while in succeeding years the spaces at the CAC got much better and bigger, with

more spaces renovated, galleries and press equipment added and so forth, we never surpassed the energy and enthusiasm of that first summer with those nineteen attending artists.

Our personal residential loft, located on the top two floors of the south end of the mill, was a beehive of activity each summer. To save money as well as to make it easier to interact, just about all the invited museum and gallery directors and distinguished artists stayed in our guest suite. Most were interesting, but it also forced us to live in a fish bowl, as we had constant guests all summer long. Luckily we had a huge loft with several bedrooms. In addition to at least one son who might be with us for part of the summer (sometimes both sons would be home), David Zaig would stay with us the entire summer, and we squeezed into another bedroom other friends who might visit when the main guest-suite was occupied by an invited museum director. The one positive aspect that eased our load was that we didn't have to cook for our visitors; all we had to do was

go down two flights of stairs to join the attending artists and staff and to enjoy wonderful meals in the CAC's "wheel house" dining room.

Life was busy and I had to fight for studio time to do my own work. It bothered me at times when some of the younger attending artists wanted VIP 'snap-your-finger' service, causing me to drop what I was doing to attend to their crisis; for the most part, the more professional artists would work out problems themselves. I guess that was just an example of young graduates wanting instant fame and a rock star life too early. In later years, I jumped less quickly as I got used to the demands of artists and as we became more secure with the CAC's operation.

In any case, the first summer was a smashing success. Even when Rauschenberg found himself too exhausted to come as scheduled, Walter Hopps came for a longer stay and his visit was influential to all the artists who attended, along with other distinguished guests who visited that summer. By the second summer, we had expanded our programs into two main sessions lasting the entire summer.

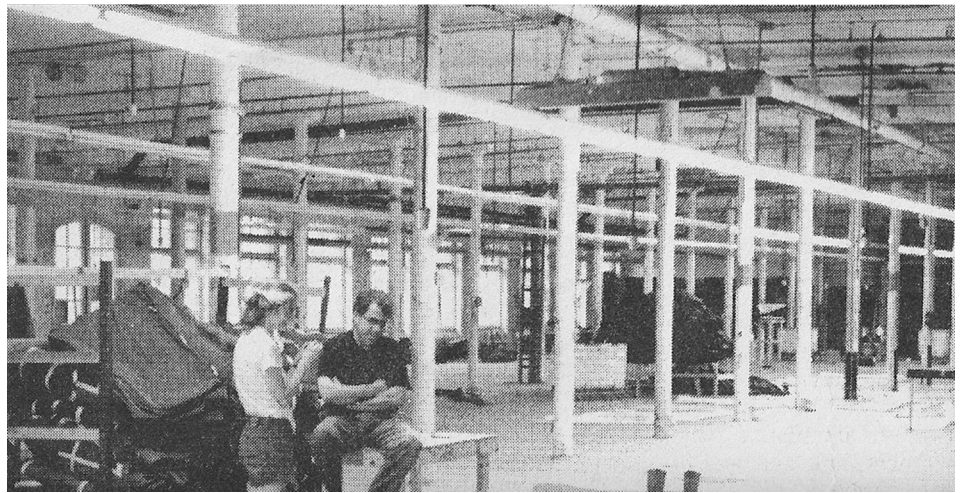
A local printmaker who had a studio in the mill, Dale Bradley, got involved and added printmaking workshops as an option. One day, he asked if the CAC could help him build a large press that he had designed, but his proposed press size did not really excite me. I had known of the big presses that famous artists like Frank Stella and Helen Frankenthaler were using but were not accessible to less established artists (or were cost prohibitive) and I asked why we couldn't



build one that large. The end result was that we built one of the largest presses in the county - which we nicknamed the "Monster Press" - with a bed measuring 5 x 10 feet (which to a printmaker is like a football field!) and with a total pressure of 800,000 pounds. In the second summer, Brandon Graving, an artist from New Orleans came as an attending artist, stayed and rented a studio for seasonal work, and eventually moved here full time. Brandon Graving eventually took over as the CAC's master printmaker and expanded the CAC'S printmaking workshops.

Each subsequent summer, on average, more than 100 artists attended the CAC, usually for two, three or four weeks at a time, and a few stayed the entire summer. We quickly got a reputation around the globe, as an average of 20% of our attending artists came from different countries. Each year we added a gallery and renovated more studio space or added equipment. Each year scores of visitors came through the Beaver Mill.

Starting the second year, when we had created our main gallery, we started doing exhibitions for the first time. As director, I had to come up with ideas for shows. For one of the upcoming exhibitions, I thought about a show with light. Now light can mean "yellow paint" or it can mean incorporating a light bulb - it was pretty open. In any case, knowing too well of all the downtown empty storefronts, I thought that maybe a few artists would like to extend the show into the downtown and install art in the empty storefronts so they could be lit up at night. We arranged to use seven storefronts for the seven art-



ists who each wanted to try a large window installation. As usual, providing music and refreshments, we had our normal gallery opening in the mill from 5 to 7 pm. Then we waited as I had scheduled a second opening from 9 pm to 11 pm to view the downtown installations. A few minutes before 9, I went to Big Y and purchased some chips, soda and cups to put out on a wall fronting Main Street, expecting perhaps 50 people - 25 from the CAC and maybe an equal number of friends. To my complete surprise, at least 500 people showed up just to see the seven installations in the downtown.

The incredible turnout stimulated us and the next year we greatly expanded our event and called it "Downtown Installations." Artist Maria Siskind volunteered to head it up, and if memory serves correctly, we had 37 vacant storefronts for artists to fill. For the evening opening, we had three bands (one band was the first to play on the new terrace at the Holiday Inn), poetry readings and interactive art. Art from the CAC pretty much took over the entire downtown of North Adams. Two thousand residents came out to celebrate during our evening opening on what turned out to be

the hottest night of the summer! In fact, it became an annual event and introduced art to those who had not wandered into our mill. It also brightened up the bleak looking downtown. Few town residents had experience with contemporary art and MoCA was years away from opening, so our efforts clearly exposed residents to new creative ideas, even if much of it was met with amused puzzlement. For example, for years residents talked about the car on Main Street that was covered with a "river of stones," a work by an attending artist from Korea. The local papers gave all our activities ample coverage and debates about art continued in the local bars and barbershops.

In the CAC galleries, which expanded to include five spaces in the Beaver Mill, we regularly held exhibitions with at least three rotations per summer, for a total of 15 shows. For each rotation, we held a public opening usually with a band playing on the loading dock in front of the mill, and with ample food and wine/beverages inside. That enticed local residents to come, but as one local resident remarked, they ended up staying because they really enjoyed the art and artists. Some pointed out where they used to

work when the mill had been operated by Sprague Electric or its brief successor, and they were intrigued to see it transformed for art's use. In reality, the CAC educated the community on art and by the time MASS MoCA opened ten years later, residents were well acquainted with "far out" creations.

I had built up a board of directors of local supporters and we worked hard. For example, partly to better expose the CAC to potential supporters, we invited 150 residents to a grand sit-down dinner. Each guest was hand-delivered an invitation that artist Barbara May (who served as board president for a few years) had designed, which included a decorated 3-D paper pyramid with an invitation scroll inside, all suspended by three Mylar balloons. Of course the invitees came (who wouldn't with an invitation like

that!) and besides, it was free and a sensational event-- probably the social event of the season. We hoped it would result in eventual donations and support.

Although I had strong views about art-business morals and treatment of artists, sometimes I had to compromise on who got admitted, on who was invited, and even on exhibitions. For example, I have a strong distaste for exhibitions where artists are required to pay to submit work. In most cases, it's a waste of money for the artists; in some cases, they are scams. But I was persuaded to do so in order to raise money. However, to offset my hesitation, I made sure we had not one but four great jurors for the first exhibition. The jurors included MASS MoCA director Joe Thompson, Williams College Museum of Art director Linda Shearer, New York gallery

dealer Diane Brown and Guggenheim Museum director Tom Krens - quite a line up! We had something like 900 applicants and we raised about \$8,000 - enough money to build out the gallery space and help operate it. We continued this type of show for several years.

There were those "moments," however. During the second or third judging, we had a curator or director at the Whitney as a juror, and we contracted out the administrative work to two artists. After the judging at the Whitney in New York, they went around the corner to get a sandwich before heading back to North Adams. They returned to find their van stolen with all the slides and juror results. It was quite an effort to try to reconstruct which artists were selected and to tell hundreds of artists that their slides were gone and would not be returned!



Yes, there were those positive “highs” but there were also these moments of “why did I get myself into this?”

The CAC continued to thrive. In order to keep pace, board members had to work hard to raise funds. Like most not-for-profits, we had a variety of money sources - grants, tuition (although most artists got partial to full scholarships, as much as we could afford to give out), selling ads in our summer brochure that was distributed by a regional newspaper, an annual gala (auction, dinner, dance, and fun), business and personal donations, and more. It was always a struggle but we always managed. We also encouraged material gifts and donations of services. Barbara Rudd served as the main development person, always chatting and thanking whoever gave even a tiny bit of money; it paid off when one donation arrived (unfortunately after I had stepped down as director). That donor had originally given an annual gift of only \$50 but had bequeathed \$100,000 upon her death.

Often, people associated with other art centers and museums would visit and upon touring our vast facilities - the CAC used more than 40,000 square feet - would believe that we had a million dollar operating budget. They would be in disbelief when I told them our budget was closer to \$100,000. We performed miracles with pennies, but also because Barbara and I were working pro-bono, our space was free except for basic operational expenses and we received many services and materials by begging. It helped that we were seasonal, although the main strain was that some expenses like insurance, minimum heat because

of water pipes, taxes and other expenses had to be paid year-round even though much of the space was used for only a few months of the year.

The CAC was the nerve center of the arts for the county. Some got inspired by the CAC and started a similar artist organizations in the region. There was not an artist who came to the area who didn't somehow contact us. It kept the CAC busy.

When I scan the list of invited guests from that decade, it's a who's who from the art world. Leading artists and museum and gallery directors spent quality time here as they interacted with artists. The attending artists could never have had such quality personal contact on their own, especially in the major cities. When a museum director came here, he or she was relaxed and open to talk to attending artists. Even Tom Krens, creator of MASS MoCA but by then director of the Guggenheim and perhaps the most influential museum director in the world, would come each summer, usually saying he only had an hour or so, but quickly becoming so involved with the art activity and artists that he would stay the entire afternoon. On a few occasions, he would give an early evening public talk to our artists, staff and invited residents who were interested in our programs.

The CAC could never afford to pay much, so the token honorariums offered were never the reason why these visitors came. For example, artist Larry Bell flew in from Taos, New Mexico almost at his own cost because he was intrigued. It also helped that MASS MoCA was ap-

pearing as a real potential project, so part of our enticement for someone to come would be an offer to tour the raw MASS MoCA space. But we also offered nice accommodations in our loft, great food in the CAC dining room and an escape to the Berkshires.

Everyone had different needs and desires and connections. Gallery owner/director Ivan Karp wanted to know the menu and wine list before committing to his visit, so Robert Henriquez was asked to bring some really good wine from New York. Since we were close enough to New York and Boston, a two or three-day “country art retreat” proved attractive to city dwellers. David Zaig had Boston connections, and first invited art critic/artist Charles Guiliano, for example, which led us to Otto Piene who invited others and eventually planned a “sky-art exhibition” at the CAC. We also tapped into the Williams College connection as several top museum directors had attended that college and so occasionally would visit the area anyway, such as Glenn Lowry, Kirk Vanderdoe, and others. Jenny Holzer lived not that far away; her husband taught art at Williams, so she agreed to come. Joe Thompson, who got to head up the MoCA project when Tom Krens got appointed director of the Guggenheim, would visit each summer; he also served on the CAC board for a few years. Some people came who I just contacted cold-- we had artists Judy Pfaff, Elizabeth Murray, Grace Hartigan, Rodney Ripps, Julian Schnabel; museum and gallery directors/curators like Dennis Barrie, Lynne Cooke, Nohra Heime, Milena Kalinowska, Arthur Roger, Laura Trippi, and others - quite a notable list that kept growing each year. Often

someone's visit would stimulate an interesting addition to the CAC experience for the succeeding year.

The CAC expanded in so many ways. We conducted open studio tours and sponsored weekly lectures and performances (including black box theater performances), we held a preliminary "sky-art" conference with artist Otto Piene, we held downtown events and partnered or cooperated with regional efforts; we hosted conferences and we were generally influential in many cultural efforts being started in the Berkshires.

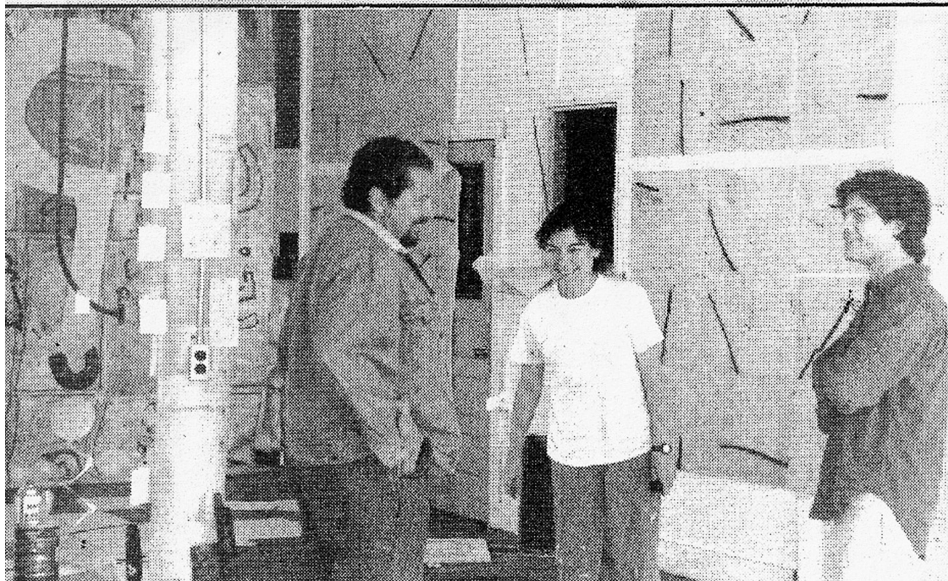
I wanted the CAC to be about quality art for working artists, but there

was always a call to do more for the community, especially in a region that had few cultural options. We held community classes for adults and for children, we had special children's programs, we hired interns, and we held tours and encouraged field trips. Some of this was difficult since we only operated during the summer months, but since kids had few choices during the summer, we did what we could.

By the last year, 1999, when I was stepping down to spend more time in the studio, they needed help for the annual Downtown Installation event; that's when I created my Eagle Street Beach, perhaps the first urban beach where an entire street

is covered with sand that has since become an annual event in North Adams.

I personally promoted other art aspects in North Adams. For example, I was involved with efforts that North Adams State College (now MCLA) was making and I came up with the concept and researched and lobbied the idea of the college starting an arts management major. At the time, only 16 undergraduate programs of that sort existed in the U.S., and although it took several years to build up, the arts management degree program at MCLA is now their pride and joy. All these efforts sprang from the energy of the CAC.



Finding summer housing proved more and more difficult since the Berkshires are a popular summer destination, and that stimulated my purchase of the Flatiron and then later, development of the huge Eclipse Mill, which was converted into 40 large live/work artist lofts - one of the most successful and influential real estate projects in the region. But the heart of the CAC was essentially that artists were coming, working, and recharging, as well as meeting and interacting with important people in the art world. In turn, the artists energized the historic Beaver Mill and the town through their creative work, exhibitions and efforts.

So many artists reported to us how important their stay at the CAC had been for their artistic development. The best measure of success was how the attending artists reacted-- and our "repeat business" was over 50%. I always assumed that artists would come only once, but we found so many came back for a

second and even a third summer. That proved to us that we were doing something right.

After ten years, MASS MoCA finally opened and I expected a boom of visitors for our galleries. I had secured a 'coup' and managed to get an exhibition of relief prints by the biggest artist names in the world. The CAC was the first to show in North Adams the work of Louise Bourgeois (there's a major sculpture of the artist in front of the Williams College Museum of Art), Henry Moore, Roy Lichtenstein, and the list goes on. I was proud of what we were offering and expected thousands of visitors. Instead, MASS MoCA inhaled all visitors to the city and our gallery visitation, which had been pretty impressive, actually decreased that summer; viewers came to North Adams to see the new, big and sensational museum, and we got lost in the shuffle. The city was not - and still is not - very good at encouraging visitors upon leaving the museum parking lot, to explore other attractions.

Nevertheless, the CAC was firing on all cylinders - artists were doing incredible work, we had a steady flow of heady visitors, and the board of directors had attracted younger people to join. I pushed friends onto the board and encouraged couples to join since I thought it might be easier to get one to come to a board meeting if the spouse was involved as well. Being a board member not only meant helping with general operations, but with events such as our annual gala, which was a huge undertaking and pulled in the entire board for countless hours.

I personally needed more time in my studio; my ambition was not



to be an art center director but to continue as an artist; I had volunteered in order to help the community and help younger artists, but enough was enough. After ten full years at the helm and after I thought the CAC was on solid footing, I stepped down. I did continue to do guest lectures and I wrote a series of books aimed at helping artists. By those means, I continued to spend a part of my time reaching out and supporting the art world.

The new board hired one director after another, with pay, and each soon resigned because it was too much work! I was dismayed to see the awkward operation of the CAC and gradually, it had to downsize because it couldn't even pay for its basic utility use. Several times I was tempted to step in but I decided that I had spent ten years directing the CAC and that it was time for a younger administration to either make it or break it. Unfortunately, after seven years, the last director, because she had connections in Troy, NY, moved the CAC out of North Adams, despite a mission statement that specifical-

ly stated that it was to operate in North Adams. At that critical moment, I could have stopped it but it would have forced me to be involved again almost full-time, and I had concluded that I had moved on. Then, too, I was older and less connected to every 20-something-year-old artist who wandered into North Adams. It was time for me to spend any out-of-the-studio efforts in other types of projects and not try to go back to where I had been 17 years earlier. The CAC's move was a sad day for North Adams and for the arts in the Berkshires.

Six or seven years later, I was instrumental in the founding of the Berkshire Artist Museum through the Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation. I hope this new effort will be my contemporary art substitute for what the CAC meant to the region. However, I do realize that at a time when there are so many artists now residing in the region, a CAC-type organization would have been critically important and perhaps thriving. There is a clear absence of cultural leadership in the city and region and the major players

are not sufficiently reaching out to the smaller players and artists - although that is from the perspective of an artist. I've personally tried to stimulate better support for struggling artists and art organizations, but it's always an uphill battle.

It's been more than a quarter century since the CAC popped into existence. I hope that this exhibition and knowledge about the history of the CAC can serve as a shining example of how artists - in a grass roots tradition - can make an important contribution to help their peers and to make the artistic community more vibrant.

EXCERPTS FROM THE 1991 NEWSLETTER:

After the second full summer, the CAC started a newsletter/brochure to inform artists about the past sessions and plans for the next season. The CAC's mailing list grew each year and the winter job was to do the full brochure and send it out. At its peak, the CAC staff was mailing out 17,000 brochures, almost all to artists who had inquired. That was a lot of work; today, all that would be done by email but in those days, there were piles of brochures that had to get addressed and sorted to qualify for the lowest postal rates. The only saving grace was that this work could be done during our slow winter season.

In the winter of 1991, the first CAC newsletter talked about the previous summer's activities (so a summary of the second summer, which was the first season where the CAC had programs for the entire summer). Here's an excerpt about Session II from that newsletter:

The second session got off to a fast start with painter Grace Hartigan who spent almost three full days here. Grace, a contemporary of and friends with Pollack and DeKooning, has had a long history of showing in N.Y. and it was interesting to hear reflections on the abstract expressionists and see slides of and hear about her new works. Montclair Museum director Robert Koenig (who studied with Albers at Yale) and his assoc. curator Alejandro Anreus came next. They conducted an intense traditional teaching/critique session over a few days. They make a good team even though (perhaps because) they often disagreed with one another, including about whether group critiques are a good thing to have. Ben Abramowitz, a long time artist from Maryland, came toward the middle of the session. Ben was also here for the 1990 session. Rodney Ripps returned for the second session. Dennis Barrie came for a day during the last week and talked about his arrest for exhibiting the Mapplethorpe photos at the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center. He went from the specifics of his case to a general overview of censorship and the arts - a frightening picture. Kirk Varnedoe, during his half-day visit, talked about new theories of art and his concepts for his High-Low exhibition presented at the Museum of Modern Art last season. Julian Schnabel made a whirlwind tour of the building stopping by to talk to many of the artists, and then joined the artists in a visit to the MASS MoCA art complex. With him was Peter Brant, owner of "Art in America." Joe Thompson, MASS MoCA executive director who conducted the tour, later dropped by for an evening discussion. The final visitor was Renato Danese, director of the

Pace Gallery in N.Y. He talked with the attending artists and looked at all their work. That evening, he conversed about what an artist should look for in a gallery and the concept of making it through the market. Questions from the attending artists brought candid responses about all different aspects of art and artists.

This was the description of just one 3-week session out of the entire summer's programs; the newsletter's narrative continues about the other sessions and future plans. The quality of visitors, as one looks back, was extraordinary and one that would be hard to duplicate in today's world. It was a special experience not only for the attending artists, but also for all the staff, artists and supporters who were involved and who helped to make the CAC so special.

EXCERPTS FROM AN ANNUAL CAC BROCHURE:

Each year, the CAC produced a brochure for the upcoming summer, with the director's note summarizing what the CAC was about. It's been about 25 years, but those annual statements would still resonate with artists today. Here's an example:

What do artist need? Artists need a place to meet a new circle of colleagues and to connect with and to talk to curators and gallery and museum directors. Artists need a place to work - usually a lot bigger than their own studio. Artists need access to new processes and inexpensive supplies. If new techniques are being used, artists need someone to get information to them quick-

ly. Artists need a block of time to concentrate on their work - either to produce or to explore new directions. Artists need to talk with people they respect about their work, about the contemporary art world, and about the future. Artists need to re-energize their artistic lives from time to time.

It helps if they can work in a place that is in an attractive area, with important art facilities nearby. It helps to have gallery opportunities where their experimental ideas can be tested in public. It helps if the place has an abundance of nontraditional opportunities - performance, large-scale installation, multimedia, new technology- as well as traditional art processes.

Most of all, it is important that the place be for artists to do serious work. And it is equally important that it be affordable. Artists spend their money on their materials, work, and studio, and many artists do not have discretionary funds.

The Contemporary Artists Center addresses all these concerns. It was started by artists for artists. The CAC has large studio spaces, interesting equipment, four galleries, and serious visitors. And the CAC continues to keep costs as low as possible.

The CAC provides an experience like none other in the country. Reserve now for an artist's residency. Check out the workshops. Use the exhibition opportunities. Stay for

a week, a few weeks, or the whole summer. Get away for a while, and experience what is happening here.

--- Eric Rudd, Founding Director

That was the message and that's what the CAC tried to deliver. Eric Rudd was at the helm for ten full years, through the year that MASS MoCA opened. By that time, the area had grown with more artists and people involved with the arts. Even with a change of leadership, it was everyone's hope that the CAC would stay an important nerve center for the region.

The Contemporary Artists Center

is a not-for-profit artist center established by artists in 1990 for intensive art work. The Center strives to provide freedom of space, materials and processes to encourage experimentation and growth in each artist. Artists can freely move from one discipline to another. Studios are open 24 hours a day.

Beyond the creative aspects of art, seminars, discussions and studio visits with renowned artists, museum and gallery directors and curators help artists put their work in the context of the international art world. The sharing of ideas with fellow artists will further stimulate one's work.

The Beaver Mill, home of CAC, is a 130,000 square-foot historic brick mill situated on 27 acres of wooded land adjoining Natural Bridge State Park. The industrial loft studios have high ceilings, big windows, and ample room for painting, sculpture, drawing, mixed media and large-scale or site-specific installations. Printmaking studios have CAC designed hydraulic platen presses, including a monumental press that can create large-scale monoprints and woodcuts up to an image size of 4'X8' on 5'X10' paper, that are especially geared to new, contemporary techniques.

ADMISSIONS POLICY:

The Contemporary Artists Center admissions policies guarantee fair opportunity and fully support existing federal and/or state regulations against discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation or national origin. The CAC does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of lifestyle or style, content and ideas in art.

The Center recommends that artists fill out the application completely to give a clear understanding of their level of experience and areas of interest. Applications may be submitted at any time.

Applications are reviewed based on art work history. This includes a review of art education, exhibitions, projects and participation in art events. Slides are encouraged, and are necessary



There exists a certain spirit, a sense of discovery and an excitement about inventing and expanding, that pushes artists at CAC into career breakthroughs. Artists who were calculated and nervous about talking to the world's most prestigious museum directors under normal circumstances, are able to talk to them as friends at the Beaver Mill. Artists who were not interested in printmaking, polyurethane foaming or new paper materials, five minutes after seeing the possibilities, couldn't resist and loved it. We constantly hear how different this Center is from every other program they have known about or attended - how work was always encouraged and wasted time was limited - how having thousands of pounds of paper or tent canvas for unusual projects was incredible - how this is a place they want to come back to again and again, just to use the facilities and make contact with the many scholars passing through. We hear how this Center becomes an extension of their own studios, only so much better.

The Center is run by artists -- we know the struggle. If you are ambitious, if you are serious, if you are productive, if you have a sense of adventure, if art means more to you than anything else, then we could be a great match.

--Eric Rudd

BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM 2016 EXHIBITIONS

MAIN AND UPPER GALLERIES

BERKSHIRE ARTISTS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

Dale Bradley, Christopher Gillooly, Brandon Graving, Robert Henriquez,
Henry Klein, Barbara May, Robert Schechter, Maria Siskind, David Zaig,
This exhibition showcases the work of nine artists who had a close association with
the Contemporary Artists Center and to the Berkshires .

- Exhibition on Three Floors

COLORS

Sarah Sutro

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Keith Bona

Peter Dudek

Howard Itzkowitz

William Sweet

ICEBERG

Installation of Lexan Sculptures 1987-2011

ROBOTIC

“Walter’s Ontogen” 1999

BLUEPRINTS

Original Blueprints from the Former Methodist Church

LOWER GALLERIES

BERKSHIRE ARTISTS

O F THE CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS CENTER 1990-1999

SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Early Work of Eric Rudd 1966-1980

MUSEUM ANNEX

(200 steps away at 82 Summer Street)

A CHAPEL FOR HUMANITY

Installation of 150 life-sized figures, 54 ceiling panels, 9/11 Meditation Garden

W.C. DRAWINGS

Figure Drawings