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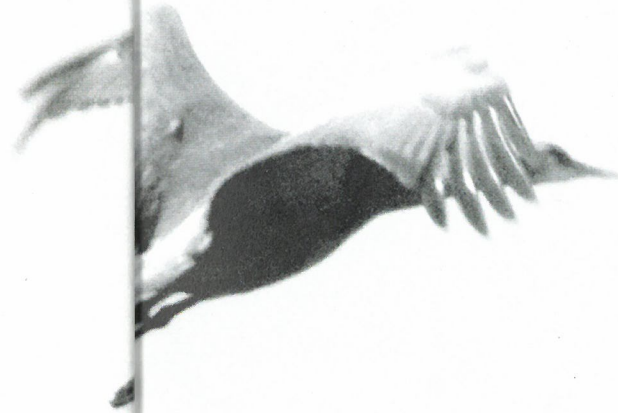
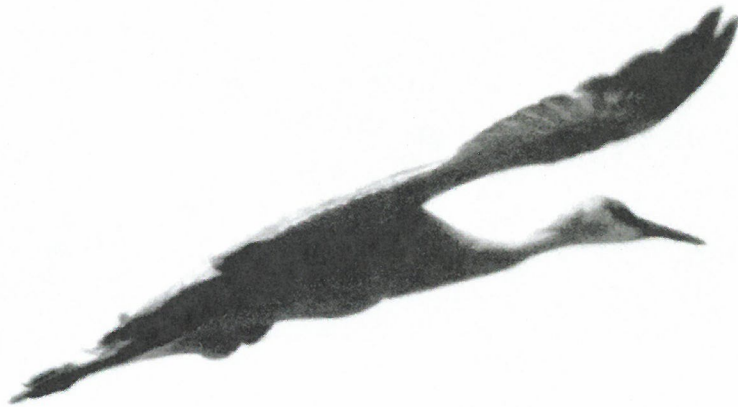
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# The Art of Dialogue

(and other life-saving skills)

by Susan Salter Reynolds

photo: "Flight of the Cranes" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze



Are there life-saving skills embedded in an arts education? Yes.

Empathy, critical response, authenticity, problem solving, collaboration, visual literacy, the ability to

productively discuss differences in vision and opinion—good, old-fashioned dialogue.

Has there ever been a time in history when these skills were needed more than

we need them now? Simply interpreting our environment requires increasingly sophisticated visual skills. "We live in a visual culture," says Will Mentor, professor of fine arts. "We have to go out

on a limb—be alive now and imagine tomorrow." Artists, he says, "are researching everything all the time. They learn how to describe what they see and acknowledge that others see differently—a source of lifelong delight."

Jonathan Silverman, chair of the education department and coordinator of the Arts in Education Program at Saint Michael's, has approached life in the arts from several directions: studio potter, guidance counselor for arts students, art teacher, a Ph.D. in aesthetic education and interdisciplinary learning, and, at Saint Michael's, teacher of how to integrate arts into curriculum with integrity. This year, he was recognized as the Vermont Art Educator of the Year for inspiring many Vermont art educators over his years coordinating the Arts in Education Program at Saint Michael's College and his commitment to visual literacy and the expressive power of the arts.

the purpose of education and how arts literacy contributes to a caring society."

The creative process pedagogy is profound, and it depends on feedback and support from peers, professionals, and professors: "What is the intent in what you are trying to create?" Then peers respond to helping their peers enhance their work based on intent.

Silverman reminds us that "while the arts as a discipline has its own vocabulary, internal standards, and progressive learning of skills and content, all of us can use such terms as *line*, *texture*, *space*, *shape* to analyze and respond to an image, whether an advertisement or a painting. Before the printing

learn flexibility, confidence, and patience, and that they acquire a willingness to investigate problems from a variety of angles. We know that they will learn how to work with others. In theatre, even if you are the only person on stage, there are dozens of relationships supporting your work.

"The arts," says Harrigan, "deepen experience. Our students are encouraged to reach and fail. They learn more about collaboration than becoming stars. There's a lot of cross-disciplinary pollination — when students performed the play *Dead Man Walking*, panel discussions on the death penalty included philosophy and political science students and professors. The play was performed just after the Boston bombings in 2013, which added yet another interpretive dimension. When they performed *The Crucible*, parallels between the colonial context of the play, McCarthyism, and the lives of Muslim-Americans were explored."

Kimberly Sultze teaches digital and media arts. In her class on nature and outdoor writing students build on their powers of observation using digital photography, illustration, and animation. "I want my students to be perceptually absorbed in the environment. I want to help them develop environmental sensitivity. Do they

spend long hours in front of screens? Yes." She laughs, acknowledging the paradox. Students work with Sultze on their capstone projects in their senior year. They propose a socially significant issue, research that issue across three different disciplines, and create a project that explores and explains the issue, using a variety of media, such as books, documentary films, and websites.

Will Marquess is a professor of English — currently teaching two fiction writing workshops and a First Year Seminar course, in which students read fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. "I'm encouraging them to be a triple threat," he says, only half joking.

"When I studied English," he recalls, "I never had the opportunity to take a workshop. As an undergraduate I was taught English

"I love going into a classroom and asking 'What is beauty?' 'What influenced your sense of beauty?' and then engaging a discussion on how our sense of beauty connects to how we care for the environment or learn to live together."

"Our biggest thank-you is always reserved for Will Marquess. You've taught us, inspired us, laughed with us, and kept us moving and grooving when we were wont to stay still. Without your 'boom-shacka-lackas' we wouldn't have half the fun, and we wouldn't get half the hard work done either."

From the Editors of the Onion River Review 2017 to Will Marquess.

Students interested in teaching art need two majors — one in the arts and one in Art Education. As Silverman notes, "our education program at Saint Michael's College emphasizes sustainability, social justice, and diversity." He says proudly, "Our graduates get jobs; in addition to learning skills, they thoughtfully examine

press, members of society 'read' mosaics and stained glass; in fact, the story of the Bible was often told through stained glass windows."

"So much of our work is about storytelling," says Peter Harrigan, professor of fine arts and theater. "And so many careers depend on good storytelling. We hope our Fine Arts students

almost exclusively by lecture." Times have changed. The seminar/workshop format, most professors agree, is more effective pedagogically, and it prepares students for a world in which they will work (most often) in groups, not alone. Do writers write alone? "Part of the writing life is solitary. But most writers also hope to please and provoke more than

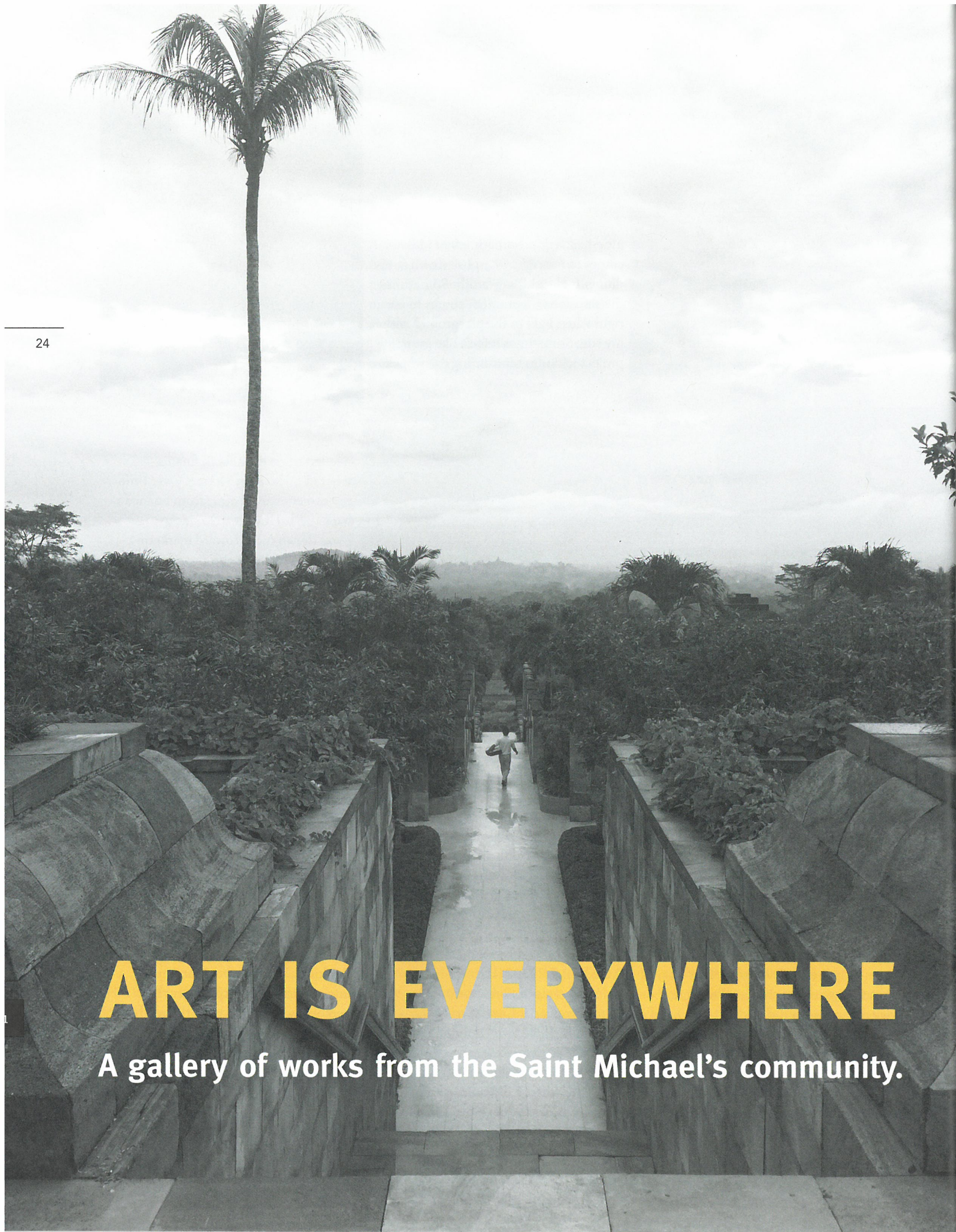
one person." Marquess also helps students organize and edit the literary review, *Onion River*, which has been published annually for 40 years. He is careful with his authority in classes. "I try to give limited responses to work, adding to their efforts, not correcting them." These classes provide critical training for life in the world — reading ability, stretching the moral imagination, understanding

different viewpoints. While few students, Marquess says, will go on to become writers or continue in MFA programs for creative writing, almost all will depend on their writing and reading skills throughout their lives. Several will go into journalism and publishing.

For Silverman and others, this is thrilling work.

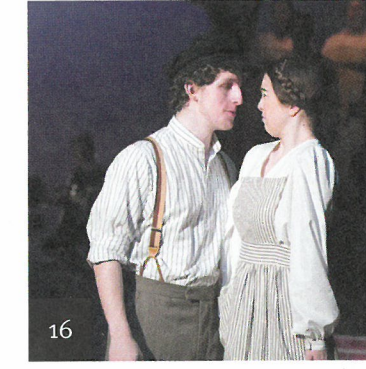
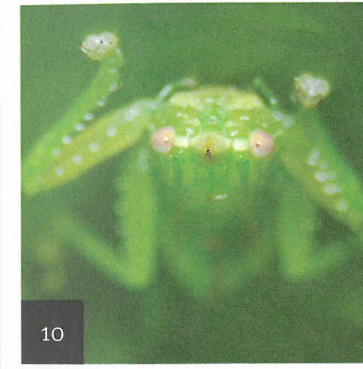
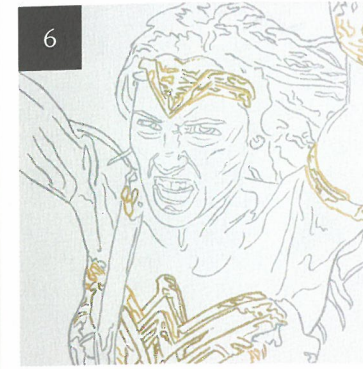
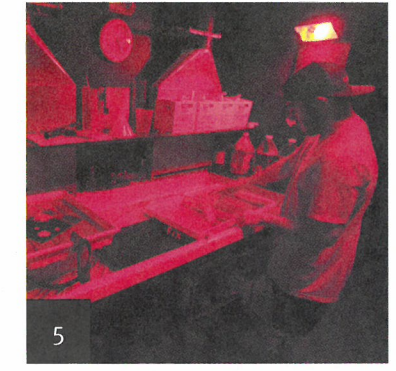
"I love going into a classroom and asking 'What is beauty?' 'What influenced your sense of beauty?' and then engaging a discussion on how our sense of beauty connects to how we care for the environment or learn to live together," he says. ❏

See more faculty work at: [smcvt.edu/magazine](http://smcvt.edu/magazine)



# ART IS EVERYWHERE

A gallery of works from the Saint Michael's community.



1. "The Path to Nirvana" by Emily Higgins '17  
Indonesia | April 2016
2. Student art hanging in the Alliot Dining Hall, artist unknown.
3. "Peek Out, Pale-billed Woodpecker, Costa Rica" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze

4. Sloane popup art show, artist unknown
5. Sloane Dark Room by Jerry Swope
6. Shavone Kenney '15
7. Jerome Monachino, Associate Director Campus Ministry Liturgical Music

8. Techzilla, Acrylic on Canvas 2017 by Julia Morrison
9. "A Tail's Detail, Blue Jay" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze
10. Cricket in Bromeliad by Ruth Fabian-Fine
11. "The Golden City", Spain 2016 by Matthew Nachatelo
12. Water lily, Nymphaea odorata by Peter Hope

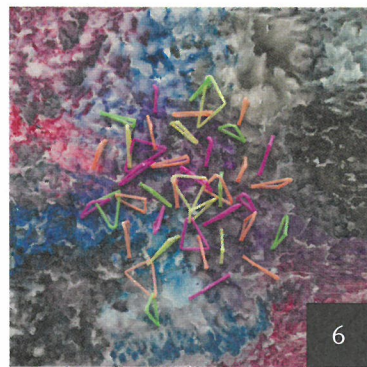
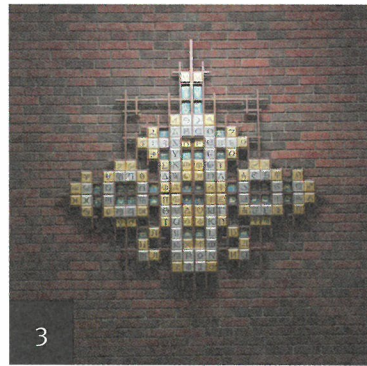
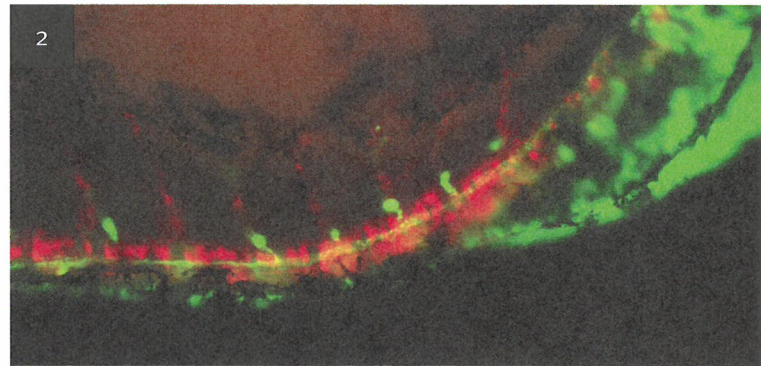
13. Senior Project by Danielle Valyou '18
14. Woodworking Class, by Jerry Swope
15. Art on campus, artist unknown
16. Mill Girls, play with music photo by Andy Duback
17. Art Class by Jerry Swope



1. Students critiquing artwork by Jerry Swope

2. Transgenic zebrafish with sensory neurons in green & motor neurons in red. Image by Jennifer Uribe '19

3. Star-Ship Alpha-Omega: A Bookish Icon by E. Thor Carlson, In Memory of John Caswell, 1959 - 1979, Class of 1981

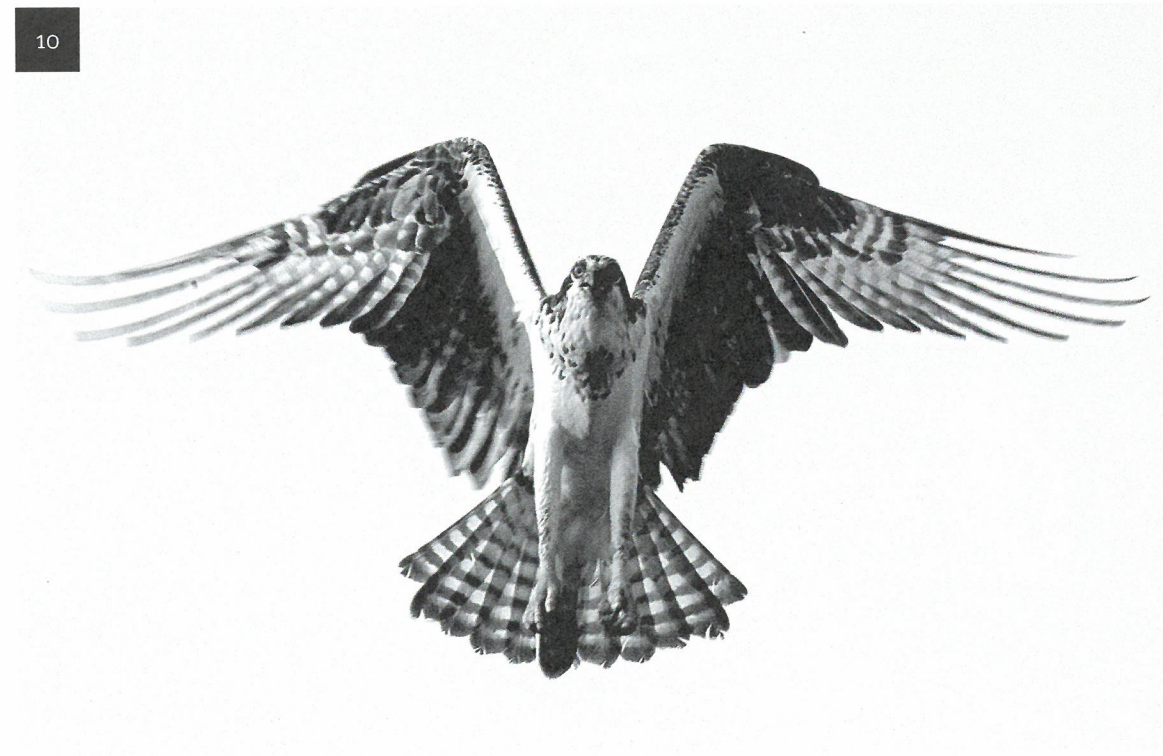
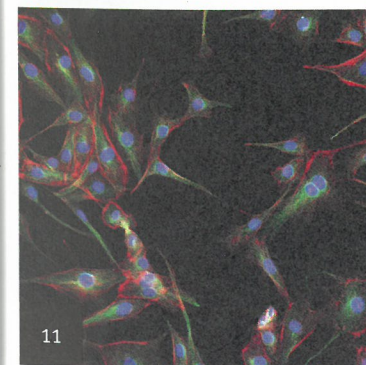


4. Liam Rademacher '19 in Art Class by Jerry Swope

5. Bathroom in Sloane Art Building

6. Project by Valeria Matias '18

7. "Caught In The Now" Indonesia 2016 by Emily Higgins '17



8. Italian Flag, (hung in Durick Library) Francis R. Lewitt, 1988

9. Mill Girls, play with music photo by Andy Duback

10. "Learning to Fly, Osprey" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze

11. Fluorescently labeled fibroblasts by Ruth Fabian-Fine





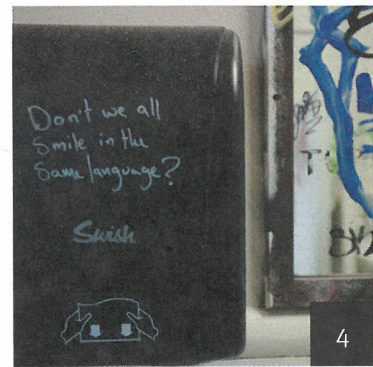
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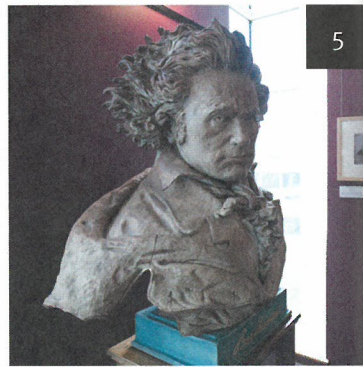
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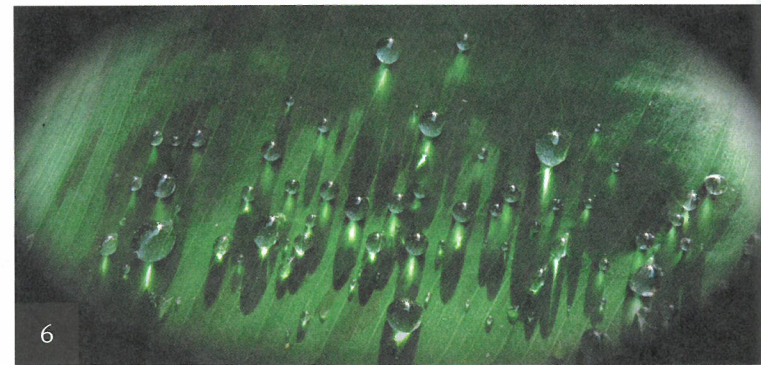
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1. "Standing Tall" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze  
2. "Spirit in the Sky" Bhutan 2016 by Dana Scheffler '18

3. Associate Professor Will Mentor and Student doing art research by Jerry Swope  
4. Bathroom in Sloane Art Center, Jerry Swope

5. In Memory of Christopher Todd Garrett, 1968-1992, Sculpture by Paul D. Spaulding  
6. Raindrops on Banana leave by Peter Hope

7. "Communal Chaos" Vietnam 2016 by Lindsey Rogers '18

I am an artist with a storytelling addiction and my vocation is a great excuse to explore the human condition and tell some remarkable stories....My art is expressed in wood and steel and fabric; in positive and negative space; in light painting a stage; in drawing attention on stage and capturing the rhythm of the moment; in the selection of just the right prop for these characters in this set of circumstances for this production; and my art is expressed in a celebration of the interstitial silences left by performers on the stage but filled with a stage picture that embraces their work and words and takes it further than spoken word or gesture alone might....I work side by side with my students, as my teachers before me worked with me. In this way I am demonstrating for them the way forward as artists — I am holding a ladder for them to start climbing and inviting them to engage in the discipline I love. I have found that the theatre is where you may be called upon to exercise any of the disciplines taught at colleges and universities at any time. It is where the liberal arts are repeatedly applied. I use my understanding of literature and the historical zeitgeist to unpack and research a script; I use math constantly in drafting and building a show; I use optics to understand light and color theory — and practice...and don't get me started on physics: It's how we put things together and how we take them apart....Each of us as educators has the responsibility to be a role model for our students in our chosen fields — and they are watching us closely. We each have a responsibility to each other and to this institution, to work together in good faith toward a better tomorrow. Our students are the future of our field, and it is up to us to be prepared to hold the ladder to their future steady so that they can take those first few steps safely and with growing confidence. We keep faith with future users of our resources when we use them wisely; when we use them intentionally, not absentmindedly; when we use them conservatively. We have a responsibility to ourselves, to our communities, and to future generations to take good care of the resources we've inherited....We owe it to our students to hold the ladder for them as they embark on their adult lives and careers. I feel the need to be good stewards is an important lens through which we should continue to engage the moving target which is the future, which we cannot predict other than that it is coming.

*From Professor of Fine Arts and Theater John Devlin's 2017 Faculty Convocation Address, "Stewardship and the Arts; Holding the Ladder for the Next Generation"*

*To watch a video from Faculty Convocation, visit: [smcvt.edu/magazine](http://smcvt.edu/magazine)*

*photo: "Sunrise of Feathers" by Jon Hyde & Kimberly Sultze*

