Looking Ahead to Fall 2004

The Curriculum Committee is putting together a wide array of stimulating courses and lecturers for the fall 2004 semester — something for everyone. Watch your mail for the catalog.

ARTS
The Sounds of Music — Tracy Wilson
Modernism: Its Beginnings and Development in European and American Art — Maureen Hickey, Mark Peltz
What is Folk Art? — Barbara Cate, Sam Farber, Lee Kogan, Gerard Wertkin

LITERATURE
Great Plays on Film — Howard Arkans and Paul Smilow, Moderators
A Southern Sampler — Paul Stein
Wit, Wisdom and Woes: Grab a Seat at the Algonquin Round Table — P. Jaffe
A Pictorial History of Reading and Writing — Christina Gibbons

SCIENCE
The Conquest of Heart Disease — Robert McInerny, Sandor Wax
The Human Brain: Functions and Dysfunction — Keith Edwards, Siobhan McNally, Dorothy van den Honert

SOCIAL SCIENCES
Today’s Headlines — James Cotter, Moderator
Exercise for Healthy Mind, Body and Spirit — Canyon Ranch, Staff
History of Oil — Karen Merrill, Darel Paul
Rise and Fall of Civilizations — Antonia E. Foisas
Emperors, Kings and Conquerors of the Ancient World — Kerry Christensen, William Darrow, Matthew Kraus
AGE SMART: Your Mental Fitness Workout — Harriet Vines
Elections 2004 — Paul Flaum

Share a wonderful evening with your B.I.L.L. friends!

10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Sunday, September 12
Crowne Plaza, Pittsfield
6 pm - Cocktails (cash bar)
7 pm - Dinner
Fun Filled Program
$60 per person
Watch for your invitation!

Dates to Save

June 1: The Round Table — Susan Arbetter, Joe Donahue, Paul Elisha, BCC
June 12: The Influence of Science on Fine Art Photography — Gregory Crewdson, Bob Gilson, David Hanson, Nancy Mowll Mathews, Robert Reichert, Berkshire Museum
June 14: The U.S., the U.N. and the World — Sir Brian Urquhart, BCC
June 18: A Conversation with Maureen O’Flynn, BCC
June 21: Untangling Tanglewood — Tony Beadle, BCC
June 24: Grupo Corpo — Jacob’s Pillow
June 30: Berkshire Opera — Rigoletto, BCC, Pittsfield
July 2: Berkshire Opera — Rigoletto, Chapin Hall, Williams College
July 15: New York City Ballet, SPAC
September 8: Canoe Trip, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, Easthampton, MA
September 12: Tenth Anniversary Celebration, Crowne Plaza, Pittsfield
September: George Washington — James MacGregor Burns, Susan Dunn
October 23: The Lion King — Old Boston Opera House
November 4: Folk Art Museum, NYC
November 21: Panel on the Theater — Jeffrey Borak, BCC
December 2: BSO Open Rehearsal — James Levine and Art Deco Exhibit, Boston Museum of Fine Arts
President’s Message

As B.I.L.L. completes another semester of outstanding courses, we can reflect with pride on our accomplishments. Today B.I.L.L.’s membership is over 1,000. In this year’s courses, you filled over 3,000 seats and took part in special events over 1,200 times. Attendance totaled over 1,000 at special projects programs. While those numbers are impressive, we are proudest of the quality of the activities in which you took part. Obviously, B.I.L.L. is fulfilling a need for dynamic, educational and entertaining experiences.

Many of you primarily attend one type of activity. Why not broaden your scope in the coming year? If you have taken only courses, try a special event. If you have not attended one of the special projects, sign up for one that piques your interest. Take advantage of the many types of learning experiences offered to you by our organization.

B.I.L.L. does not shut down after the spring semester ends. For example, there is an exciting series of special projects scheduled for the month of June. Special events will take us to Jacob’s Pillow, the Berkshire Opera Company and SPAC. Clearly, summer is full of many worthwhile activities in our beautiful Berkshires.

In September, we will be running at full speed again. We will kick off the year with a gala 10th Anniversary Celebration. An invitation will be sent to you shortly. Save the date—Sunday, September 12, 2004. Our fall semester promises to be one of the best ever so watch for your catalog.

Have a pleasant summer! I look forward to joining you at many B.I.L.L. functions in 2004-2005.

Paul Ferguson

Printmaking Techniques

During the month of March at the Clark Art Institute, Michael Cassin, Curator of Education and James Ganz, Curator of Prints, Drawings and Photographs, presented a fascinating series of four lectures entitled Making an Impression. Each illustrated lecture was followed by a tour of the Print Room to study examples of the works discussed each week. Prints viewed included works by Durer, Rembrandt, Hogarth, Castiglione, Goya, Daumier, Toulouse-Lautrec, Daguerre (Daguerrotype), Warhol and several Japanese printmakers.

The lecturers traced the historical development of printmaking and discussed the tools used as well as the distinctions between various methods—from the earliest relief prints, wood cuts and wood engravings, through intaglio printmaking (etchings and engravings), lithography and early photography. Mona Sherman, Special Projects Chair, and the Clark Art Institute deserve special recognition for developing this course.

—Ruth Degenhardt

Good Wishes, Alexandra

Thank you, Alexandra Warshaw, for providing sound guidance, continuous support and valued leadership during your tenure as BCC liaison. B.I.L.L. wishes you success and happiness in your retirement and hopes to see you often in our classes and at our events.

Thank You, Clark Art Institute

B.I.L.L. thanks the Clark Art Institute for providing a wonderful place in which to hold our classes. The auditorium is spacious, comfortable and offers much-appreciated media equipment.

A special thanks to Judy Ensign, our liaison with the Clark, who has taken care of our scheduling and media needs most graciously.

Summer Reading

If you anticipate taking the course, A Southern Sampler, in the fall 2004 semester, you may wish to begin the required reading over the summer. Paul Stein has selected for class discussion The Ballad of the Sad Cafe by Carson McCullers and Light in August by William Faulkner.

B.I.L.L. Board

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HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!
B.I.L.L. 2003 – 2004 Volunteers

B.I.L.L.’s strength and vitality comes from its corps of active, committed volunteers—the people who plan courses, special events, special projects, recruit lecturers, keep our membership growing, help in the office, publicize our activities, communicate with our members, supervise class arrangements, provide leadership and pitch in when help is needed. These are the men and women, 232 strong, who gave B.I.L.L. their time, energy, creativity and skill during the past year. We hope we included everyone. They are our engine and our fuel, and we give them our thanks.

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William Vogt
Ira Wasserberg
Louise Wasserberg
Sandor Wax
Terry Weaver
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Jerome Weinstein
Marjorie Weinstein
Julie Weiss
Joseph Wheelock, Jr.
Norma White
Herbert Whitehead
Bill Winslow
Deborah Winslow
Evelyn Zwerner
The Great Stone Arches

Few people in the Berkshires are aware of an old, beautiful and still functioning engineering marvel just a few miles away in Middlefield, Mass. Hidden in the otherwise wild Westfield River Gorge, there exists a series of seven tall keystone arch railroad bridges built in the 1830’s. Amazingly, four of these arch bridges, set without mortar and essentially unmodified, are still in active use today! Some 16 freight trains and 2 Amtrak trains cross these bridges on a daily basis pulled by locomotives weighing 30 times more than those of the mid 19th century.

Railroads and steam locomotives were truly in their infancy in 1833 with just a few very short routes in operation in some eastern U.S. coastal locations. But with their New York competitors using the Erie Canal, the industrialists of Boston recognized that a railroad link to Albany and to the burgeoning Western territories would be vital to their commercial interests. They launched a plan, sold stock and sought rights-of-way for a route from Worcester, Mass., to Rensselaer, NY. For a railroad, the barrier of the Berkshire Mountains was a formidable obstacle. But a possible route, with barely negotiable grades, could go through the Westfield River Gorge more or less following an ancient Indian trail called “Unkamits’ Path.”

West Point graduate Major George Washington Whistler (he was the father of the great American painter, James McNeill Whistler and, therefore, “Whistler’s Father”) was hired to lead the surveying and engineering effort. Considering that the primitive “black powder, mule, and pick & shovel” construction technology of the day would not accommodate large excavations, Whistler laid out a route which would cross the river seven times. The Gorge is narrow and serpentine, with steep ridges rising on both sides of the river, and each crossing required a bridge. Three of those would be over 60 feet in height.

Master stone mason Alexander Birnie of Stockbridge and a crew of highly skilled Irish, Italian and Russian immigrant masons built the seven massive dry-laid arch bridges using cut blocks of Chester Blue granite. The completed rail line, named the Western Railroad, opened in 1841. It was 150 miles long and climbed 1,458 feet — both world records at the time. Based on this remarkable achievement, Whistler was later commissioned by Czar Nicholas I to build a railroad from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

Following a well-marked footpath, one can explore these stone arch marvels and, with only a little imagination, “time travel” back to the mid 19th century. For a map and more description see http://wizardshadows.com/page4.html.

— Bob Desrosiers