

BCA Exhibition Advisory Committee

Minutes

April 1, 2025, 5:30-6:30pm

Committee Present:

Barbara Perry, Dana Vanderheyden, Deb Wilkinson, Kristina Pentek, Lisa Lillibridge, Rachel Kahn-Fogel, Parker Silver (Absent: Brian Collier, Sarah Rogers)

Staff Present:

Heather Ferrell, Curator/Director of Exhibitions, Jacquie O'Brien, Curatorial Asst/Gallery Coordinator

BCA Staff welcomed advisory committee and began with the discussion with a **PPT**, and snapshot of fall 2024 and spring 2025 attendance for exhibitions and programming.

2024 vs. 2023 Comparative Attendance for Fall

- Fall **exhibition attendance** (September – January) has decreased by approximately 20% compared to same period in 2023. Advisory committee agrees that construction in the area and difficulties in the park with drug use, etc, have made a negative impact on attendance numbers.
- Participation in Fall (Sept-Jan) **exhibition-based tours** has more than tripled in 2024 vs. 2023 over same period. This is due to dedicated outreach with NEA Artist in Residence program with BHS, supported by the Gallery Learning Coordinator. The position has been vacant/frozen as of November 1, 2024 onward with current curatorial staff covering tours and related duties.
2024: 30 Tours (555 participants) vs. 2023: 10 Tour (182 participants)
2024: 1,004 vs. 2023: 1,762

Fall 2025 Exhibitions-based Programs

- *Conversation with Stéphanie Morissette*: Thursday, March 27, 2025, 6-7:30pm
23 in person attendance/ 11 virtual attendance
- *Artist Talk with Bunny Harvey*; Thursday, May 8, 6-7:30pm. Register online or in-person at BCA
- Family Art Saturday: April 26, 2025, 11am-2pm and May 24, 2025, 11am-1pm

Preview: Summer 2025 Exhibitions, June 6, 2025-September 14, 2025:

- *Jacob Hashimoto: a lowercase sky* (Ground Level)
 - Opening Reception Friday, June 6, 2025 at the BCA Center, all invited.
- Roth Gallery (2nd Floor) – Tentative: Animation Exhibition (title and artists to be finalized), more information to follow soon via the BCA website. Heather explained that potential window renovations to West side of building may leave gallery team with a one-day installation, or a delayed opening – hence, a organizing a new show that can quickly be installed.

Discussion: Upcoming Exhibitions

How to Say Goodbye: Grief, Loss, and Mourning (working title)

- Exhibition centered around themes of grief, loss, memory, transition and endurance
- How can BCA engage the community with this exhibition and these themes?
- BCA's is collaborating with VAPS (Vermont psychologists) program committee to assure that the exhibition is being planned with sensitivity and multi-faceted perspectives.
- Confirmed artists include, John Killacky and Lydia Kern, both of Vermont.

Suggestions and Ideas:

- E.g. Parker Silver – proposes additional focus on concepts of ‘loss of self’, physical and mental health, and ‘former self’. Suggests an exercise for gallery and tour attendants to write letters about their grief to place in a box as a symbolic exercise.
- E.g. Lisa Lillibridge – points out the impact, effects and process of the COVID-19 Pandemic in regards to different cultural views of lamentation and grief. Suggests focus on children losing pets as preparation for future loss.
- E.g. Dana VanderHeyden – recommends further inquiry into political and democratic loss as well as the loss of the hope that can accompany it.
 - Suggests that gallery team more closely works with Art from the Heart coordinator, Rebecca Schwartz, to understand the intersection between health and grief.
 - Advises that BCA works with Vermont writers
- E.g. Rachel Kahn-Fogel – agrees that there should be a space within the show that offers a place for visitors to express grief.
- E.g. Kristina Pentek – offers contrasting example shown at Dog Mountain’s Chapel. Suggests creating a space for a wall of post-it notes that guests can write their personal experiences with mourning, grief and loss.
- E.g. Deb Wilkinson – recommends the book “Do Dogs Go to Heaven?” by Nev Green and Mark Stibbs to enrich research. Especially in connection with healing from the loss of a pet.
- E.g. Barbara Perry – Suggests community engagement through an outdoor candle lighting in City Hall Park to aid in a sense of release from personal grief.
 - Proposed a further course of research, how do we deal with opening the door to loss (in politics, etc)?
 - Echoes the suggestion by Kristina Pentek to offer a space in which visitors can write about their own losses and place it in a public place.
- E.g. Heather Ferrell – Suggests a few methods of community connects, a video diary, offerings to those who have passed, how different cultures/identities interpret death and process death.
- E.g. Jacquie O’Brien – Suggests the addition of a movement or music component for processing loss, grief and mourning. Such as dance, meditation, musical composition, singing, etc.

Preview: Spring 2026 Exhibitions, February 13, 2026 – May 23, 2026:

- *Human Impact* (Ground Level)
 - Opening Reception February 13, 2026 at the BCA Center, all invited.
 - Exhibition focuses on the pressing issues facing the natural environment of New England and our global world.

Diane Gabriel Visual Artist Award

- Award created to foster innovation and support emerging artists with a \$5,000 stipend and \$1,000 value for BCA Studio access or class registration with gratitude to Mark Stohler and family. This is year five of the award and the final year.

- The award application closed on March 10, 2025. A panel of jurors reviewed the 54 applications and will make a selection by mid-April. The winner will be announced via press release on April 25th and celebrated at the opening reception for summer 2025 exhibitions at the BCA Center.

Committee Call to Action Items:

- **How can our advisory committee help staff support programming and advocacy? (e.g. program attendance, program support or promotion)**
 - Advisory committee agrees the gallery staff need support in various methods to assist with programming and spreading the word about BCA's gallery offerings.
 - Committee requests that gallery staff reach out to committee members with needs that they may assist in, such as specific projects. In addition, the committee agrees to continue to advocate for support in larger board meetings.
 - E.g. Such as taking an artist to dinner, research for shows, links to share with gallery staff, etc.
 - E.g. Barbara Perry – suggests that BCA gallery team brainstorm a way to make artists more visible during opening receptions, such as a sash, nametag, etc.
 - **Gallery Staff Position Job Posting**
 - Advisory committee agrees to share this job posting with those who they believe to be a good fit for the position.

While these ongoing challenges regarding attendance and staff shortages presented some opportunities, Heather noted it had made it very difficult for her and team to maintain the same level of gallery learning momentum that was sustained formerly with a dedicated staff member. With planning and support, exhibitions can better explore creative ways to continue gallery learning, tours and programming.

Next Meeting: Tues. October 21, 2025 @ 5:30pm

Minutes: J. O'Brien/H. Ferrell