Below is an overview of the impact of the Mollie Ruprecht Fund for Visual Arts in 2013-14. The Ruprecht Fund sponsored five Visiting Artists throughout the year, four of whom coordinated their talks with local exhibitions of their work. In addition, the Ruprecht Fund co-sponsored an international symposium on stone sculpture.

In September, the Ruprecht Fund hosted Fred Wilson, a conceptual artist whose work explores the relationship between museums, individual works of art and collections of other kinds. Wilson’s work examines and intervenes in traditional museum display, and deals with issues of race and representation. Wilson is a 1999 MacArthur Fellow and represented the United States at the 2003 Venice Biennale. Since 2001, he has explored making sculpture in glass, among other media. His work can be found in several public collections, including The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, The Tate Modern in London, The Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Wilson delivered a lecture in Williams Hall and answered numerous questions from a large audience of students, faculty, and local art enthusiasts.

Also in September, the Ruprecht Fund hosted the photographer Jonathan Gitelson, who presented a public slide lecture on September 11 in Williams 301 that accompanied his exhibition in the Colburn Gallery, “Jonathan Gitelson: Halfway Between Somewhere & Nowhere.” In addition, Gitelson conducted individual critiques with advanced Studio Art students, met with the ARTS 237 Advanced photography class, and had a lunchtime conference with several Studio Art majors. Gitelson’s work has been exhibited throughout the United States, Canada and Europe and is in the permanent collection of numerous institutions that include The Museum of Contemporary Photography, The Museum of Fine Arts Houston, The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, The Milwaukee Art Museum, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Museum of Modern Art New York and The Albert and Victoria Museum in London. He is the recipient of the College Art Association’s Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Fellowship, The Puffin Foundation Fellowship, The Netherlands-America Foundation Grant and the City of Chicago Community Arts Assistance Program.
In October, the Ruprecht Fund supported the gathering of a group of Renaissance and Baroque sculpture scholars from across the United States and England as well as a renowned marble sculptor from Vermont in a symposium, “Material, Manufacture, Meaning and Movement in Italian Renaissance and Baroque Sculpture.” The symposium examined the practical issues and implications of sculptural production and transport in the Early Modern period. The scholars who participated in the symposium have all published widely on aspects related to materials, meaning, and technical issues in Renaissance sculpture. They include: William Wallace (Washington University, St. Louis); Michael Cole (Columbia University, New York); Christina Neilson (Oberlin University, Ohio); Victoria Avery (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK; Peta Motture, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK; Amy Bloch, SUNY Albany; Sarah Blake McHam, Rutgers University, New Jersey; C.D. Dickerson, Kimbell Museum, Fort Worth; Emma Jones, Pembroke College, Cambridge, UK; and Kelley Helmstutler Di Dio, University of Vermont (organizer). Sculptor and UVM alum Richard Erdman gave the concluding address, which focused on the production and movement of his sculpture, Passage, the largest monolithic sculpture ever made from Italian travertine. The symposium coincided with Di Dio’s senior seminar on Early Modern sculpture, thus giving students an opportunity to converse with major scholars in the field. The symposium drew an audience of over 150 scholars and students. A published volume of essays from the symposium is under contract with Ashgate Publishing.

In February, the Ruprecht Fund sponsored a joint exhibition and artists’ talk by the Puerto Rican artists Carlos Ruiz-Valarino and Nathan Budoff. Ruiz-Valarino’s work, Folding Bicycle Project is a video art project that presents the foldable bicycle as a medium that intervenes in the city. It regards the city as a field of action where a variety of social, economic and cultural experiences converge. Thus, the bicycle becomes an artifact that documents different urban practices. Budoff’s paintings “aspire to render a utopian vision of life in the contemporary Caribbean and in our cities. This is not to say that my paintings are a fantasy of a possible perfect world that could exist, but rather an intent to create a realistic and positive vision of the wonder of our existence here and now.” Budoff and Ruiz Valarino have both shown extensively throughout the Americas. Both artists teach at the University of Puerto Rico, where Budoff is an Associate Professor.

In April, our Ruprecht visitor was the world-renowned artist Polly Apfelbaum. Her lecture in Williams Hall was coordinated with a solo exhibition at the BCA Center in downtown Burlington. The exhibition, entitled Evergreen
Blueshoes, was co-sponsored by the BCA and The Mollie Ruprecht Fund, with additional support from the Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. Apfelbaum’s work is held in the collections of The Museum of Modern of Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of Art of American Art, New York; Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle; The Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; and the National Academy Museum, New York. Apfelbaum has been the recipient of the Rome Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Richard Diebenkorn Fellowship, a Joan Mitchell Fellowship, an Artist's Fellowship from the New York Foundation for the Arts, and a Pollack-Krasner Foundation grant. Her visit received an extremely enthusiastic response from the department and the wider arts community.

Attendance for all Ruprecht events has been impressive. In addition to our Studio and Art History students and faculty, these lectures draw individuals from UVM, the BCA Center, the Fleming Museum, St. Michaels and Champlain Colleges, and the general public. The studio and classroom visits add a dimension to student interaction that is usually only available in graduate programs. Ruprecht visitors’ creative work has also been deeply integrated into the curricula of our courses. Students learn about artists’ work via slide lectures and readings prior to their visits, and are thrilled to have the opportunity to speak with these artists in person. The Ruprecht Fund has thus proven to be deeply beneficial both to our teaching mission and to the Department’s public profile.