



The School of the Arts and Planetary Health

The School of the Arts is a site of intersection and engagement in Planetary Health. For years, our faculty have done research and creative work that explore individual and community well-being, ecological disaster and renewal, and the intertwined nature of the arts with empathy and care for people and planet. We teach courses in our programs that guide our students in their exploration of art as a vehicle for communication, activism, and healing. We are collaborating on Planetary Health-centered projects and courses within and beyond the disciplines in the SoA including Dance and Environmental Studies, Studio Art and Larner College of Medicine (SciArts), and new courses and initiatives such as Arts and Health, Arts and Activism (semester program in NYC) and Community Arts (which focuses on arts to create, engage, and enrich communities) and the reopening of the Ceramics Co-Op to expand arts access to a wider community of students, staff, and community members. We are eager to collaborate with new partners in Planetary Health and continue to consider our own individual and program-wide commitments to better health for the planet and its inhabitants. The Lane Series, with guest artists from all over the world, and the Fleming Museum, with its rich collections of art are resources for our community to explore the intersections between cultures, histories, activism, social justice, while providing spaces and experiences that promote care and healing.¹

We have ongoing programming and events across the SoA that engage with these issues. Below is a sampling of upcoming events, as well as examples of the research and courses related to Planetary Health in our work.

¹ **The Jameel Arts & Health Lab in collaboration with the WHO–Lancet Global Series on the Health Benefits of the Arts.** Sajnani, Nisha et al. The Lancet, Volume 402, Issue 10414, 1732 – 1734, November 11, 2023; **What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review [Internet].** Health Evidence Network synthesis report, No. 67. Fancourt D, Finn S. Copenhagen: [WHO Regional Office for Europe](https://www.who.int/initiatives/arts-and-health); 2019 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553778/>; WHO: Arts and Health <https://www.who.int/initiatives/arts-and-health>



Events and Programming

October 11: Arch at Mt. Philo State Park

Program organized by the Flynn, with collaboration from students in Looking and Listening (SoA course). From the Flynn's description of the event: "Kaleider's Arch is an attempt to build a freestanding arch, made two thirds of concrete and one third of ice. Touching audiences with themes of death, renewal, and hope, this work also points to the extraordinary, yet flawed, systems humans create: language, economies, architectures, democracies – and, inevitably, to the impact of these systems on our ecological system, and on ourselves."



October 16-25: Exhibition of Angela Manno's paintings in the Colburn Gallery, Williams Hall, "Saving Biodiversity: Icons of Threatened and Endangered Species by Angela Manno" with 10/16 gallery opening at 5pm and lecture, "The Art of Evolution: Contemporary Icons of Threatened and Endangered Species." at 6pm in 301 Williams Hall

Applying the traditional processes of icon painting to contemporary environmental concerns, Endangered Species aims to elevate non-human species to their rightful and equal place in the community of being. These contemporary icons represent the confluence of Manno's search for a form of expression that merges her art, scientific understanding, and mystical sensibilities with the current zeitgeist, which is turning more and more towards ecology, given the concern over the biosphere and climate disruption.

October 25 and 26, 7:30pm Cohen Hall: Shimmering Site

UVM Dance professor Julian Barnett directs "Shimmering Site," a new interdisciplinary performance that explores themes within UVM's Planetary Health Initiative, which describes "whole health" as "physical, mental, social, spiritual, community, and ecological well-being." The performance reimagines Cohen Hall for the Integrative Creative Arts as a place for experiential possibilities of this wholeness, creating a performative bridge that examines Earth and the body as a shimmering sight/site. The performance includes an ensemble cast of Theatre and Dance Program performers and features original live music from UVM alum Koa Ritz and innovative projection design by Alex Reeves of Vanish Works.

Fleming Museum: Vermont Female Farmers, Spring 2025

45 photographs created by JuanCarlos González between 2020 and 2022
Curated by Kristan M. Hanson, produced by Fleming Museum of Art

Fleming Museum: Rooted in Nature: Growing the Fleming's Collections, Past and Present, Spring 2025.

Curated by Kristan M. Hanson and Margaret Tamulonis, produced by Fleming Museum of Art, in collaboration with Professor Nicole Phelps and graduate students in her HST 6690 World's Fairs seminar



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Ongoing:

McCrorey Gallery, Howe Library, curated by Kelley Di Dio's Campus Arts Projects students. Intersections between Climate Change and Marginalized Identities

Inclusive Arts Initiative, RSENR. Gallery in Aiken curated and installed by students in Campus Art Projects, in collaboration with Hannah Kershaw and Cathy Gattulo from RSENR, with advising support from Suzy Zaner (Fleming). Themes center on environment, identity, crisis and healing.



Fleming Museum: Collections Gallery Rotations. Works of art from the Fleming's collections selected around the theme of planetary health

Care is also central to the UVM community and disciplines spanning the arts and humanities to science, engineering, and medicine. The emerging field of planetary health, for example, takes an interdisciplinary approach to caring for people and natural systems. In conversation with the UVM Planetary Health Initiative, this gallery also features works of art that invite reflecting on whole health, environmental stewardship, and hope.



Curriculum

SoA Arts and Health-Rebecca Schwarz (from Burlington City Arts and the Art from the Heart program at the UVM Medical Center, fall 24)

Art History: Campus Art Projects (every semester): Collaborations with campus partners to make art more accessible across campus—Rubinstein, CNHS, Inclusive Arts Vermont

Studio Art: SciArts (Larner/Studio Art) integrated course—Pamela Fraser (spring 25)

Studio Art: Digital Art and Ecology-Jaimes Mayhew

Studio Art/Art Education: Community-Based Art (jen berger)

Studio Art: Art and Activism semester in NYC (Mildred Beltré)

Dance: Environment and Performance-Julian Barnett

Theatre: "Diversity in US Theatre" and "Rad, Femme, and PGM" (Zeina Salame)

Both courses include pieces touching on the interconnectedness of identity with the health of communities through topics like colonialism, capitalism, conflict, climate change, ecology, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, neurodivergence, body diversity, mental health, and more. In the same vein, Salame's work on the UVM Theatre production season emphasizes the inclusion of writers exploring many of the aforementioned themes, while also embracing sustainable production practices.



Salame has facilitated Improv for STEM communication workshops for: *BiIDS (formerly QuEST)*, *SACNAS*, *The Larner College of Medicine*, and (upcoming) *Med Ed Grand Rounds*. Using applied improvisation to support UVM scholars in communicating their research (especially around planetary health) to broad audiences dynamically and accessibly is something she is eager to continue.

Research

Pamela Fraser, Studio Art

Forthcoming book, *The (In)Complete Book of Colors*

The (In)Complete Book of Colors is a broad survey of pigments and dyes from antiquity to the present-day, an illustrated history that elucidates the specificity of colors and their operation within social, economic, and cultural structures. It is a book about where material colors come from, how they came to be, what their uses are or were, and what they reflect about the society from which they emerged. The book seeks to make sense of the dizzying array of existent and obsolete colors, to clarify redundancies, to present a history of pigments and dyes in a unified fashion, to elucidate how colorant invention and manufacture reflect human ingenuity equally to histories of disregard for human dignity and health, and environment. The book draws on old dye and paint handbooks and treatises from around the world and on the scientific pigment and dye analyses of historic objects.

Colors are often thought of as a light, even superficial, topic, but the production and uses of material colors are often entangled in complex and weighty human affairs. Over and over again, we see colorant manufacture dependent on human exploitation and causing environmental damage; and over and over again, colors are used as symbols and codes that reinforce hatred and discrimination. In the medieval Iberian Peninsula, practice was established that forced Jewish people to wear yellow hats, which led to use of the yellow star in the German Nazi era. In Georgia, USA in the mid-twentieth century, President Jimmy Carter recounted that black bars were once painted on school bus fenders to identify a bus holding African American children amidst attempts to maintain racial segregation. In terms of production, indigo dye was at the center of the labor movement in India that is often credited with toppling colonial power there. Today, mass-produced synthetic dyes are often found to be carcinogenic as well as causes of environmental damage.

Steve Budington, Studio Art

Art and Ecological Landscape Design

Steve Budington works on interdisciplinary projects in art and ecological landscape and garden design. Steve is interested in the local and immediate relationships he (and we) have with the landscapes we inhabit and directly impact every day. He's interested in the cultural structures shaping our understanding of what's possible in our landscapes, their management, and constitution of 'place.' Steve's sculptural paintings and drawings are informed by these concerns, by his direct observations and drawings landscapes, and the history of landscape-based art and its attendant critical studies. Alongside his work in painting and drawing, Steve designs and implements landscapes and gardens, using various methods for building native plant communities in our built environments here in the Champlain Valley. Steve studied landscape design with Larry Weaner of *New Directions in the American Landscape*, and he now serves as a certified Extension Master Gardener with UVM Extension. In this capacity Steve works as project lead for a collaboration with the Pierson Library and Town Hall in Shelburne, overseeing the management and evolution of its gardens and bringing related outreach and educational opportunities to the public there. As a faculty member, Steve is developing a studio art class, "Representing Landscapes," that engages students with these various disciplinary perspectives. He is exploring collaborations with other campus programs and faculty with a goal of expanding his research and building a larger lecture class that looks at the history of landscape management, landscape design, and related artistic practices and cultural histories.

Jennifer Karson, Studio Art

The Generative Tree Art Exhibition, Jenn Karson, UVM Art + AI Research Group

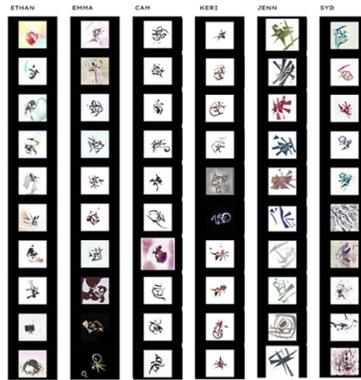
January – March 2025, Phoenix Gallery, Waterbury, VT

In the aftermath of the devastating 2021 and 2022 *Lymantria dispar* (spongy moth) outbreaks, which left vast portions of Vermont's forests defoliated, this exhibition confronts the ecological consequences of such environmental events. The story of these outbreaks, which shocked and unsettled Vermonters, is told by the artist through a series of over 800 images that document the crisis as it occurred in her Colchester, VT, neighborhood. The narrative's unconventional perspective does not identify heroes or villains and challenges presumptions about invasive and native species. The story



and its visual research serve as the backdrop for an artistic exploration of a broader conflict between natural and machine worlds.

Using pattern recognition techniques in the fields of generative AI and natural history, the collection of artworks on view envisions new pathways for environmental intervention, calling on audiences to not only engage with the devastation caused by the *Lymantria dispar* but to imagine futuristic technologies that listen to and learn from the natural world.



Julian Barnett, Dance

Subject To Change: Garden, Choreography and Performance by Julian Barnett and Jojo Tobias, Original music by Menghan Wang, The Current Center for Contemporary Art, Stowe, VT, March 2024

Subject to Change: Garden is part of a series of performance works that explore the feelings of precipice and instability within our ongoing socio-political and climate crises. Part performance, part meditation, the research has resulted in multiple iterations, ranging from smaller-scale intimate performances to larger multigenerational ensemble work. Each iteration approaches the context as a critical co-habitant of the work and embodying gallery spaces (The Current Contemporary Art Center), historic theaters (Judson Church), festivals (Instinct Experimental Dance Festival), and academic conferences (American College Dance Association at Montclair State University). Integrating live sound, whispering bodies, objects, and a physicality that explores precarity in visceral and emotional ways, all these elements work together to receive a collective projection of futurity at a time of oscillating crisis and urgency. The research continues an ongoing interdisciplinary interest in the intersection of environmental issues, ontology, and embodied art. Presented as part of The Current's "In the Garden" exhibit, the "garden" serves as a space for deep wandering, fluid time, and a portal towards refuge and belonging.

jen berger, Studio Art

What Was it Before it Was Gone? (2024) is a site-specific prototype of a memorial for "now", which creates space to grieve the social, ecological, and human losses in our daily lives since 2020. It was fabricated with tools from the wood shop, metal shop, laser cutter, vinyl cutter, and other materials at the Generator Makerspace.



What Was it Before it Was Gone? is the fourth creative installation under the umbrella of *Feeling in Public is a Radical Act*, a series of creative works and research that looks at the intersections of public space, public art, acts of care, and grieving in public, and investigates how what we put into public spaces can create care or harm.



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David Feurzeig, Music

Feurzeig's Play Every Town: 252 Community Concerts for a Cooler Climate was recently featured on the front page of the Wall Street Journal and NBC Nightly News.

Feurzeig used to play concerts around the world, but he became increasingly concerned about how his travel contributed to the climate crisis. As a result, in 2022, he began a 7-year project to perform a free piano concert in each of Vermont's 252 towns, to call attention to the climate crisis and call into question the normality of long-distance touring, while celebrating Vermont's community life through music. At each concert he's joined by one or more local musicians, from students to stars. Each show is also a fundraiser for a local or state environmental organization. Each concert includes collaborations with local musicians or artists. In several instances, this has sparked or revived local connections that continue after the performance. Given the historic flooding in Vermont over the past two years, Feurzeig's project is increasingly urgent, providing an example of how individual action and the power of the arts can create change, help communities come together and become more resilient, and can help begin healing.



Ace Lehner, Studio Art

(Trying to) Stay Cool (at the Association for the Study of Arts of the Present, October 2024) is a collaborative performance between scholar/artist Ace Lehner and artist Libby Paloma, grappling with the tension and layered cognitive processes that we collectively face while navigating life amidst the ever-increasingly prevalent climate catastrophe. Embracing a need to find queer communion in the face of what sometimes leads to feelings of overwhelm and emotional paralysis, Paloma and Lehner deploy camp, humor, inflatables, and more to open space to explore how we might, in fact, stay cool in our complex and fraught contemporary reality.

(Trying To) Stay Cool

a performance by artists
Ace Lehner and Libby Paloma



Nicolei Gupit, Studio Art

Gupit is a multidisciplinary artist whose work concerns empathy and care for people and the planet through creative projects that center on personal narratives around the global climate crisis and global capitalism and their intimate relationships with migration and diaspora. For instance, her installation project, Migrant Belonging(s), in November 2023 resulted from a series of interviews I conducted with first- and second-generation immigrants from Albania, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Lebanon, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the United States whose families decided to live and work in Italy in search of a better life. Gupit's project consists of life-sized, paper clay cast sculptures that replicate personal belongings



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relating to stories and histories of migration, such as passports, bags, medicines, shoes, canned goods, wallets, and documents—objects essential to emigrating to a new country in addition to those objects that recall home, as described in the interviews. Broadly, the diverse migration stories she gathered for *Migrant Belonging(s)* reflect a common desire for community with one another and with nature. With the support of the College of Arts and Sciences' Faculty Research Support Award, Gupit also developed a community-oriented art project that focused on the relationship between the climate crisis and local fishing communities in La Union in the Philippines. This past July, Gupit carried out interviews and co-created handmade clay art with Filipino fishing communities as a means to gain insight from fisherfolk who are at the forefront of the impacts of the climate crisis, highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, acidification, warmer temperatures, and sea level rises. As a whole, Gupit's art practice aims to draw attention to the ways immigrant and diasporic communities respond to socioeconomic pressures posed by the climate crisis and global capitalism.



Fleming Museum

Recent Special Exhibitions

Land Marks: Paintings of Human-Altered Landscapes, Fall 2023 and Spring 2024

Curated by Kristan M. Hanson, produced by Fleming Museum of Art

Never Spoken Again: Rogue Stories of Science and Collections, Spring 2024

Curated by David Ayala-Alphonso, produced by Independent Curators International
(current and forthcoming exhibitions listed above)



UVM Class Visits and Collaborations

The Fleming Museum is an invaluable resource to the entirety of the UVM campus. Class visits and projects offer opportunities for students and faculty to engage with the rich diversity of objects in the Fleming permanent collections and exhibitions and create engaging pedagogical opportunities.