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Vermont Studio Center’s mission is to provide studio residencies in an inclusive, international community, honoring creative work as the communication of spirit through form. Located along the banks of the Gihon River in the historic village of Johnson, Vermont, VSC seeks to foster artistic creativity through community, collaboration, and quiet reflection, supported by the unspoiled beauty of the northern Green Mountains.

VSC recognizes it operates on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples for thousands of years and is the home of the Abenaki, Cowascook, Missisquoi, Penacook, and Wabanaki people. We honor, recognize, and respect these peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we gather.

VSC believes in the equality and inherent value of everyone, despite differences of ability, gender, class, sexuality, and race; and thus, is committed to ensuring that the institution adheres to the principles that affirm the dignity of our staff, working artists, collaborators, allies, supporters, and community members.

At VSC, we develop and nurture the space for creative energy to take hold and grow. This year the COVID-19 crisis necessitated that we do things differently. As a result of COVID-19, our on-campus residency program paused and we shifted our focus to providing a variety of online offerings to our extended community of more than 22,000 artists and writers. In July and August, we resumed our residency program for local artists and writers, opening at a reduced capacity and practicing safe, social distancing. In the interest of safety our on-campus residency programs have been on hold since September.

In response to the pandemic, we expanded our programs online to include a variety of artist talks, exhibitions, readings, book discussions and writing exchange groups. From mid-March through December 2020, VSC offered over 75 new online events and activities.

Moving forward, VSC is developing virtual programming that will continue to uplift the diverse talent of artists and writers, to amplify an inclusive array of voices and visions, with a commitment to those who have been and remain underrepresented in the art world and marginalized in our society.

During this time of uncertainty, we are proactively addressing the imperative for change to better serve our mission and values within the context of our current shared reality.

Rather than pausing to wait for “normalcy” to return, we are using this time to challenge the status quo, and to thoughtfully evolve the VSC residency experience and our virtual programming with a renewed commitment to safety, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. We are rigorously evaluating and addressing equity in every level — applicants, residents, staff, and board. VSC is engaged in anti-oppression training and using this experience as a framework in our ongoing process to examine all aspects of VSC’s practices and programs.
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear VSC Community,

At VSC, we know that art is essential. Our mission is to honor creative work as the communication of spirit through form and we are trying to live that mission by ensuring that the work we do is always sustainable and equitable.

Last year was filled with tremendous loss.

It was also a year that challenged and inspired us to do the work that it takes to create real change.

It was a year that dared us to examine with rigor, to connect with compassion, to evolve with intention and to imagine with abandon.

We’ve entered 2021 guided by our mission yet with the unwavering awareness that the world has changed. We have embarked on a path guided by anti-oppression training and imbued with a clear and present commitment to collaboration. With your help, we will continue to evolve.

For your review, enclosed please find a sampling of what we did in 2020. I know that we would not be here without you. Thank you for inspiring us and making all that we do at VSC possible.

Together, we are stronger.
Together, we are VSC.

Elyzabeth Joy Hollord
Executive Director

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

Dear VSC Friends,

Vermont Studio Center started 2020 ready for positive change. A national search for a new Executive Director was nearing completion and our top candidate gave us confidence that VSC would have the right leader at the right time to evolve and improve VSC guided by a commitment to excellence, diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. Since arriving last July, Elyzabeth has inspired us all to develop consensus around a shared vision for VSC, guided by shared values and inclusive of all members of our vast community.

In the midst of this extraordinary year, I find myself deeply grateful to be a part of this organization. For nearly 30 years I have enjoyed the good fortune to be a resident, a board member and now the chair of the board. In each of these roles, I have witnessed and participated in the evolution of the VSC experience.

The challenges of 2020 provided us with the opportunity to strengthen our commitment to each other and to the VSC community, and that is exactly what we have done. We are examining the work we do and ensuring that we are continuously employing best practices in all that we do. We are engaged in social distancing, and learning how to gather virtually in constructive ways that foster creativity and growth through active discourse and collaboration.

We have renewed our commitment to providing space for artists and writers to flourish and each of you continue to make this work possible. On behalf of my board colleagues, I want to thank everyone in the VSC community for your continued support, engagement, and generosity.

Mary Louise Pierson
VSC Board Chair
I am a co-founder of Vermont Studio Center and have been a member of the board since 1984. Jon Gregg and I met at the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 when he was a student in my studio sculpture class. Several years later he became my graduate teaching assistant and we formed a friendship and professional relationship that was the cornerstone for the founding principles of VSC. I was director until 1989 when I stepped back in consideration of my family and 'day job' as Dean of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. After that I remained active on a part-time basis to bring my experience in arts administration to the organization of VSC. I am now retired, and feel privileged to serve on the VSC board as both a founder and former board chair.

I grew up in Princeton, NJ and received a BFA from the Tyler School of Fine Arts and an MFA in Sculpture from Yale University. After a year in South Woodstock, VT in the mid 1960's I moved to Philadelphia, PA in 1966 where I lived and worked until 2002. I moved to Ivoryton in the Town of Essex, CT in 2002 where I served as President, Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts from 2002 – 2007.

Since retiring, my wife Judith and I have spent time every summer at Biscay Bay, Newfoundland, Canada.

I started my career at the University of Pennsylvania as an educator of undergraduates for a year (1966-67) and moved to the Graduate School of Fine Arts from 1967-1977. I served as Director, Office for Continuing Studies, Philadelphia College of Art from 1977 – 1985, during which time I also served as a Thesis Advisor and Lecturer in the College’s Graduate Art Education Program. I served as Dean of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1985-2001). I was VP for External and Alumni Affairs for PAFA 2001-2002. I also served both PAFA and LACFA as a Professor and Advanced Studio Critic.

Making art has been a central part of my entire life. I have maintained a studio and involvement as a sculptor throughout my career. I stopped showing in the late eighties when my attention was dominated by administrative responsibilities, but retirement allowed me to increase my studio practice and the personal rewards of making art.

On behalf of my colleagues on the Vermont Studio Center Board and staff and with deep sadness, I share news of the death of Frederick S. Osborne, VSC’s beloved co-founder, former co-executive director, former board chair, and life trustee from 1984-2020. Our hearts are with Fred’s wife Judith Barbour Osborne, his surviving children Sophia and Jessica, and his six grandchildren.

After receiving his BFA, with honors, from the Tyler School of Fine Arts and an MFA in Sculpture from Yale University, Fred devoted his professional life to mentoring, supporting, and inspiring artists, at times sacrificing his own studio practice and sculpture making to elevate and amplify the artistic voices of others. He was a teacher, an advisor, and a celebrated arts administrator. During his storied career in arts education, Fred developed a twenty lectures series on aesthetics in Fine Arts utilizing the collection of the Barnes Foundation; created the MFA program at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; directed the office of Continuing Studies at Philadelphia College of Art; and served as President of Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts.

As a teacher and mentor to fellow VSC co-founder Jonathan Gregg, Fred informed the foundational culture and values of VSC and was the philosophical heart of the organization from its inception to his passing. He established and championed VSC’s celebrated commitment to providing a noncompetitive community which fosters creativity, collaboration, and quiet reflection to honor creative work as the communication of spirit through form. He devoted the final 36 years of his life to stewarding VSC in service to so many of us and the more than 22,000 artists and writers who comprise the VSC community.

In addition to VSC, Fred served on the boards of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design; the Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design; Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts; and the Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, among others. In 2018, he was presented with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award by Marquis Who’s Who in recognition of his unparalleled contributions to the artist profession.

I know that all of you join the VSC board and staff as we celebrate the exceptional life of Frederick S. Osborne.

Mary Louise Pierson
Board Chair, Vermont Studio Center

DEDICATION

1940 - 2020

REMEMBERING FRED OSBORNE

Fred Osborne and Board Member Susie Cronin, VSC 35th Anniversary, 2019, Red Mill Dining Hall

FRED OSBORNE BIOGRAPHY

I am a co-founder of Vermont Studio Center and have been a member of the board since 1984. Jon Gregg and I met at the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 when he was a student in my studio sculpture class. Several years later he became my graduate teaching assistant and we formed a friendship and professional relationship that was the cornerstone for the founding principles of VSC. I was director until 1989 when I stepped back in consideration of my family and ‘day job’ as Dean of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. After that I remained active on a part-time basis to bring my experience in arts administration to the organization of VSC. I am now retired, and feel privileged to serve on the VSC board as both a founder and former board chair.

I grew up in Princeton, NJ and received a BFA from the Tyler School of Fine Art at Temple University and an MFA in Sculpture at Yale University. After a year in South Woodstock, VT in the mid 1960’s I moved to Philadelphia, PA in 1966 where I lived and worked until 2002. I moved to Ivoryton in the Town of Essex, CT in 2002 where I served as President, Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts from 2002 – 2007.

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LEADERSHIP

In July, interim Executive Director Ellen McCulloch-Lovell retired from her commitment to VSC. In announcing McCulloch-Lovell's appointment, VSC Board Chair Mary Louise Pierson stated, "In this moment of VSC reaching a new level of space and creativity, I am thrilled to know that Ellen McCulloch-Lovell will be here to help guide us through it. Our mission aligns with her belief in supporting artists and writers. As someone who has a long history as an arts administrator and a political appointee, she is capable of making the case for public support of the arts."

McCulloch-Lovell fulfilled her commitment to VSC and so much more. She led VSC through the difficulty of navigating the onset of the pandemic and the pause in residency that began in March.

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell shared upon her departure from VSC, "I am grateful to have served such a worthy mission for this year with the strong support of the board, staff, and donors." McCulloch-Lovell reflected, "Vermont Studio Center is a creative, resilient place that will continue to serve artists and the wider community."

VSC welcomed new Executive Director, Elyzabeth Holford in July. Mary Louise Pierson said in an announcement of Holford’s appointment to VSC staff: "I am so thrilled to welcome Elyzabeth to the Vermont Studio Center community as our new Executive Director. Elyzabeth's work with nonprofits, corporations, and academic institutions has taken her around the country and globe. She has worked with artists, researchers, business leaders, and policy makers and has the skill and expertise to bring Vermont Studio Center to a new level of artistic and creative energy."

Elyzabeth has made a career commitment to social justice and creating spaces that promote equitable, collaborative opportunities for growth. In the months since her arrival, she set an intentional path of speaking with and listening to as many voices in the VSC community as possible.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

We welcomed Jennifer Blair as the new Director of Finance and Human Resources in April. Jennifer brings with her eight years of experience as the Business Manager of Damas House where she served as the Director of Finance and Human Resources, and supported the Executive Director and Board of Trustees. In 2007, she was a Vermont Week resident at VSC.

Mark Hallet, VSC's Chef for almost 22 years, retired at the end of the April. Mark set a high standard for food at VSC. During his tenure Mark served 16,620 artists over 278 sessions. Mark arrived well-qualified for his position: he served in the US Navy, attended culinary school in Boston, opened the Four Seasons in Boston as Sous-Chef, then served as Executive Chef at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, VA. In 1994, he moved to Vermont to be Executive Chef at StoweFlake Resort. Mark’s legacy of dedication to great food will continue with Liz Kaufman, formerly VSC Kitchen Manager and Sous Chef and now Head Chef.

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Valued trustee James Taylor retired from the VSC Board of Trustees after 15 years of commitment and service. Taylor joined the Board in 2005 and brought to VSC his experience and knowledge of finance from a 41 year long career in investment banking, principally with Morgan Stanley in the USA and Canada. Taylor helped guide VSC as Board Treasurer and Chair of the Finance Committee.

John Yau joined the VSC Board of Trustees in December. He is the author of 13 books of poetry, a fiction writer and art critic. Additionally Yau has also published numerous monographs. Yau is Professor of Critical Studies at Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers University) and lives in New York City.

VSC mourns the passing of co-founder Fred Osbourne. Fred was a venerable colleague and preeminent leader of Vermont Studio Center from its inception. Fred embodied the values of VSC on a very personal level.
Due to the diligent adherence to COVID-19 safety guidelines by our neighbors, Vermont experienced the lowest COVID-19 infection rate in the country during the summer months. This dedication created an opportunity for us to provide two safe residencies for Vermont-based artists and writers. Following the Vermont Governor’s regulations and working under the guidance of the Vermont Department of Health, we implemented numerous safety practices. As a result, residents were able to have focused studio time and safely make connections with their fellow artists and writers.

In mid-March we made the difficult decision to end the residency early, just before the Governor of Vermont mandated our closure. During the ensuing pause our talented and dedicated staff has been focused on simultaneously planning for the future and staying focused on what we can offer in the here and now.

RESIDENCY DURING COVID

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Thanks to a generous sponsor, 22 Vermont-based artists and writers attended a one week session in July for a deeply discounted fee. We offered participants a second week extension and six residents accepted. In August, we hosted 20 Vermont-based artists and writers and one New Hampshire writer. The session lasted for two weeks with the option for a third and eight residents stayed on.

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RESIDENCY PROGRAM

2020 began with expectations of a year ahead that would be like many that had come before: a campus bustling with artists and writers, meals and community, collaboration and creation. We did enjoy residencies as planned for both January and February.

During these residencies we featured artist talks and readings from talents such as Didier Williams, Bushra Rehman, Sydney Lea, Emily Bernard, and Tomory Dodge. However, March threw us a curveball.

In mid-March we made the difficult decision to end the residency early, just before the Governor of Vermont mandated our closure. During the ensuing pause our talented and dedicated staff has been focused on simultaneously planning for the future and staying focused on what we can offer in the here and now.

RESIDENCY DURING COVID

This summer we learned that with a commitment to social distancing practices fully in place and offering each individual resident a private bathroom, we could safely host a smaller group. We provided a take-out breakfast and lunch, and residents had the choice of enjoying a physically distanced dinner either in the dining room or outside under a tent. Programming was created to offer distanced in-person attendance as well as remote participation.

Our summer residencies included readings and craft talks by Vermont-based poets Elizabeth A.I. Powell and Tina Escaja and artist talks by Steve Buddington, Brian Belott, and Karyn Olivier.
“Working with Belle was a joy. She read my manuscript carefully and generously, and offered both big-picture and specific suggestions. I had been feeling deflated and stuck around this project, and her insights allowed me to rekindle my faith in it and to see the next steps forward. She also gave me a perfect tailored reading recommendation. I am so grateful to VSC, and was honored to receive sponsorship from the guiding light that is the Rona Jaffe Foundation, which has long embodied the kind of literary work I aspire to produce.” — Marta Bausells

The circumstances of 2020 necessitated that we take a pause from in-person residencies. However, throughout the year we connected with our community in ways that we have never before. Our staff came together and collaboratively created a diverse online presence. We are excited to continue to grow this initiative in 2021 and beyond.

Virtual programs provide the opportunity for us to stay engaged in the worldwide community of artists, and makers, writers, and thinkers.

We began a monthly online book discussion series encouraging diverse voices to be heard and creating spaces for dialogue. We greatly expanded our digital reach to writers with an array of poetry and prose readings from our alumx and Visiting Writer communities, as well as craft talks, and one-on-one mentoring opportunities. We created a new reading series, Writer to Writer: Conversations on Craft and Featured Readings which pairs VSC alumx and friends in dialogue on the many layered aspects of being a working writer.

The Rona Jaffe Foundation funded all women Visiting Writers, including Belle Boggs and Terese Mailhot. In October and November 2020 Boggs and Mailhot each gave a featured virtual reading, craft talk, and held one-on-one manuscript consultations with 12 individual women writers, serving a total of 24 writers. For those who requested financial assistance for manuscript consultations, full funding was provided by the Grant Assistance Program.

We launched a lineup of robust online visual art programming featuring alumx interviews, gallery talks, virtual studio tours, and online Visiting Artists talks. These programs provided space for our community to stay connected and learn from each other’s practices. Some of the Virtual Visiting Artist Talks included Wendy Red Star, Abigail DeVille, and Sheila Pepe.

Our virtual programming was also supported by the Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Humanities Council, and by individual donations.

All of our virtual programming is archived on our website and can viewed on IGTV.
The Red Mill Gallery program features work initiated by individual proposals and hosts solo exhibitions. Wolf Kahn Gallery II features group exhibitions and involves nationally-recognized guest curators. Both spaces provide opportunities for innovation in a gallery setting focused on but not limited to the visual arts.

In early 2020, VSC hosted gallery opening receptions in conjunction with Open Studios, which provided additional programming options for residents. We saw a significant increase in public participation from Johnson and surrounding towns. We kicked off January 2020 with Videos on Loop, a group exhibition in Wolf Kahn Gallery II, consisting of time-based work by VSC alumnx and guest curator by VSC fellow Sandrine Schaefer.

We continued to have physical exhibitions throughout the year and while the pandemic posed challenges for in person visitors, we were able to reach a larger audience by sharing these shows through Virtual Artists Talks and Tours on our social media channels and on an Exhibitions page featured on our website.

Throughout the year, VSC hosted thirteen exhibitions with alumnx, staff, and community members, all of which were managed in-house by VSC Visual Arts Manager, Kristen Mills, and were supported by Staff Artist, Daniel Zeese and Writing Across Media Facilitator, Sarah Audsley.

2020 EXHIBITIONS
Brenda Garand: Broken Speech
Chiara No: Hiding in Plain Sight
Gibson + Recoder: Camera Obscura
Bread and Puppet: Insurrection Resurrection
Melissa Dadourian
Kate Laster
The Broadsides
Video Show: Videos on Loop
Emerging show: Distant Future
Bread and Puppet: Bedsheet Mitigations
Laura Heijn
Jill Madden
Martin Brominski

Photo left page:
Photo right page, top:
Photo right page, bottom:
Chiara No, Installation shot of Cosmologists, Hiding in Plain Sight, August 2020.
Photo by Matt Neckers.
Dear Friends of the VSC School Arts Program,

I am writing to thank you for supporting the children at Johnson Elementary School (JES) through your gift to Vermont Studio Center’s School Arts Program. Your generosity allows our program to continue fostering creativity and enriching the lives of our students, which makes a lasting impact on the community. The School Art Program serves three local schools including: Johnson Elementary, Ashlee Rubinstein’s high school students at Lamoille Northern Supervisory Union, and Matt Necker’s students at Green Mountain Technology and Career Center.

It has been an incredible school year! I had the pleasure of teaching 223 elementary students with help from the 2019 School Arts Fellows, Taylor Cha and Dove Drury Hornbuckle. They each participated in the Johnson Elementary art program for two months over the fall and winter. Taylor brought his experience as a comic book artist to the classroom, helping each student create a comic book. Dove brought his experience as a ceramic artist, providing students with the opportunity to create key chains, clay platters, coil vessels, and dogs/creatures. As a result, the students created over 500 ceramic art pieces!

We are thankful for all of the talent and enthusiasm the 2019 School Arts Fellows brought to the students at Johnson Elementary, Lamoille Northern Supervisory Union, and Green Mountain Technology and Career Center. The diverse community of artists from the Vermont Studio Center (VSC) continues to be a rich resource for students. Artists throughout the U.S., as well as from South Korea, Denmark, Turkey, Israel, Canada, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Ireland, helped hands-on in the classroom and visited with students. We received classroom support from 34 VSC resident artists, local parents and volunteers, and art room assistants who spent a combined 465 hours at the school.

This spring we navigated many unexpected challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Despite school closures necessitated by the pandemic, I was determined to keep my students engaged and to encourage them to use their creative outlet. In order to provide the children with equal access to art materials, I mailed 172 art kits to the students of Johnson Elementary School.

Each Emergency Art Kit included drawing paper, a pencil and colored pencils, an eraser and sharpener, an oil pastel set, a watercolor set, a carton of 24 crayons, markers, an origami pack and more.

The origami paper was donated by the 2017 School Arts Fellow, Sok Song. I wanted to provide students with art materials not only for the ‘Art for Remote Learning’ exercises, but also for a creative outlet during these difficult days of social distancing. The importance of creating art is vital, especially when it was so difficult for the children to verbally express their emotions during this difficult time. The Emergency Art Kits garnered a lot of publicity for the program, including several interviews with newspapers, local TV news, and radio programs.

Despite all the unprecedented challenges, I am pleased to report on another successful and rewarding year at Johnson Elementary School. We could not have accomplished this without your generosity. Twenty-five years ago, I started going into Johnson Elementary School once a week to teach art, and I just completed my 18th year as primary art teacher at JES. I am thankful to be a part of such an enriching art program, and to have the privilege to witness the impact Vermont Studio Center community has on the growth and development of these children. We are deeply grateful for your continued friendship and faith in our work.

Sincerely,

Arista Alanis

“I am blessed to be a part of this community. I feel lucky and am thankful to be living in Johnson while working for a wonderful supportive organization, Vermont Studio Center, with the opportunity to teach the Johnson Elementary School children. I am so fortunate to be able to do this.”

-Arista Alanis
In 2020, the Kitchen Manager and Head Chef Liz Kauffman, Resident Life Manager Harlan Mack, School Arts Coordinator Arista Alanis, and Executive Director Elizabeth Holford formed Comm-Unity Projects, an initiative designed to combine resident experience, community outreach, and DEIA training. Harlan Mack organized DEIA training for staff and Board members with Autumn Brown from AORTA. Out of that training the Comm-Unity projects team has created a list of evolving Comm-Unity Agreements for staff. Staff have and continue to participate in team building, anti-oppression, and conflict resolution practice sessions throughout the year.

Other Comm-Unity focused projects include online workshops to support nutrition and food sustainability, and weekly prepared meals for staff.

Comm-Unity projects began outreach work to explore partnership opportunities with local farms and institutions, including Vermont Farm to Table and Salvation Farms. This outreach will support the cause of sustainability, and with grants we hope to build a community meals project for Johnson residents who are food-insecure.

In 2020, Liz Kauffman took over as VSC’s representative on the Johnson Works Board Committee. Johnson Works is a non-profit organization with a mission to make Johnson a better place to live, conduct business, and visit. The Johnson Works Board of Directors includes local business owners, as well as representatives from Northern Vermont University, VSC and other community organizations.
CAMPUS & RENOVATIONS

During the COVID-19-related lockdown, Plant powered down and weatherized all campus buildings to preserve energy and fuel. Once the lockdown was lifted and some of our staff were able to be on campus safely, Plant continued with planned renovations and demolitions, and focused on general upkeep, repair, and refurbishments to our campus buildings.

Demolition of Miller Barn. Land was returned to seeded grass, 2020.

Renovation of Pearl House will be complete in early 2021.

The absence of residents during much of 2020 has allowed our dedicated Plant Operations team to address many maintenance issues that have proved impossible when we were in full residency.

We coordinated the demolition of two old, unused, and beyond repair buildings: Miller Barn and Cottage were both taken down and returned to open space.

Barbara White, Red Mill main entrance, and Kowalski 1896 house got a fresh coat of paint. Maverick’s exterior trim was replaced and painted as well.

Interior and exterior window cleaning in studio buildings, window repair in Maverick, bathroom repair and maintenance were also completed.

We removed three abandoned underground oil tanks and dealt with vandalism to one oil tank at Firehouse. All sites where tanks were removed led to soil remediation. Other small projects included repairs to the front steps at both Bradley and Trustee house, chimney repair, and electrical and plumbing upgrades.

Looking towards 2021, The Campus Master Plan is being revisited and adjusted to meet the changing health and safety needs brought on by COVID-19. These plans include private bathrooms for all residents, ventilation upgrades, and a campus wide evaluation to ensure VSC is an excellent steward of our buildings, land, and community.
Vermont Studio Center’s communication team quickly pivoted its communication strategy from the support and promotion of residents to promoting a robust virtual program schedule, and redoubled our efforts to amplify the voices of our alumx community. A comprehensive communications plan was developed and has helped to streamline activity and maximize the effectiveness of our communication platforms.

Significant improvements to the VSC website have also been made. We developed a Share Your News form to gather and share news of exhibitions, readings, awards, and events for VSC alumx. We eased navigation and created consistent formatting with an eye toward accessibility, and we developed a press and an alumx page to showcase the best of VSC and our talented community. To connect and inform we regularly shared updates with our community through email blasts; these updates included staff and alumx features, virtual programming schedules and highlights, and COVID-19 relief resources for artists and writers.

In 2020, VSC engaged with our community to invite participation in designing our future. VSC Forward took the form of nine virtual gatherings with VSC Executive Director Elyzabeth Holford to engage in constructive dialogue, share thoughts, re-examine values, and explore how we re-define a meaningful residency. We were thrilled with the response we received from our community. Together, we will co-create a future for VSC that honors our values, builds positively upon our traditions, and addresses the complex world in which we now live.

General operating support from charitable foundations and individuals ensures that VSC continues to be a thriving resource for artists and writers from around the globe. While the global pandemic presented challenges throughout all philanthropic giving, our External Engagement team worked to meet these challenges and adjusted our fundraising strategy to ensure these essential funds.

The pause in residency for the first time in over 35 years left VSC fully dependent on gifts and grants. Many generous donors, including individuals and foundations, agreed to unrestrict their previously restricted gifts for critical general operating support. Support for our general operations provides essential funding for VSC to address safety considerations necessitated by the pandemic, accessibility, and equity across all facets of our program. This holistic approach includes capital improvements, virtual programming, IT systems, and strengthening local and international partnerships.

In addition, the External Engagement team met benchmarks for fundraising and outreach initiatives, including rolling out two annual appeals in the spring and fall. We asked our annual donors to consider making a monthly recurring gift. Sustained giving continues to be a reliable source of funding.

Exterior Engagement
Vermont Studio Center’s total income revenue for 2020 was $4,880,983.18, with a total earned income of $782,818.60. Due to the unprecedented circumstances of this year, and the pause in our residency program, we sustained a COVID-19 related earned income loss. We anticipate that the recent spike in COVID-19 cases nationally will have a negative impact on our residency program and earned income for the foreseeable future. VSC sought and received $642,178 in COVID-19 specific relief in the form of government grants that helped us offset some of the hardship we are experiencing due to lack of income.

In 2020, Vermont Studio Center received $3,380,466.03 in philanthropic support from more than 450 donors. This diverse group of individual donors and charitable foundations includes current commitments from the Craig Neilsen Foundation, the Windgate Charitable Foundation, the Still Water Foundation, the Hellen Plummer Charitable Foundation, the Wolf Kahn and Emily Mason Foundation, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Humanities Council, and many others. Individual giving included two annual appeal campaigns focused on encouraging sustained giving, resulting in 144 gifts totalled $19,670.00.

*All of VSC’s reported financial statistics are subject to change pending the completion of the 2020 audit.
Vermont Studio Center welcomes John Yau to the VSC Board of Trustees. The VSC Board of Trustees provide leadership and support to VSC staff and community.

In 1976, he published his first collection of poetry, Crossing Canal Street (1976). Since then, he has published many books of poetry, including Bijoux in the Dark (2018); Exhibits (2010); Borrowed Love Poems (2002); Forbidden Entries (1996); Berlin Diptychon (1995); Edificio Sayonara (1992); and Corpse and Mirror (1983); which was a National Poetry Series book selected by John Ashbery.

His 3 books of essays are: The Passionate Spectator (2006), The Wild Children of William Blake (2017), and Foreign Sounds or Sounds Foreign (2020). In 2018, he received the Jackson Poetry Prize, which is awarded annually to an American poet of exceptional talent who deserves wider recognition. Yau is Professor of Critical Studies at Mason Gross School of the Arts (Rutgers University) and lives in New York.

John Yau has a long history with VSC. He has visited the Johnson, Vermont campus a number of times as a Visiting Poet and/or Critic, as well as promoting VSC to young writers and poets.

“I think it is a dream for an artist or writer to be given a studio, delicious daily sustenance, and the possibility of real and deep conversations with others working in the arts, and with visiting critics. The effect of the residencies and programs at the Vermont Studio Center lasts far beyond the physical time one spends there.” John Yau

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Vermont Studio Center
8 Pearl Street
Johnson, VT 05656
info@vermontstudiocenter.org
vermontstudiocenter.org
802.635.2727

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