By day, the men and women of Slam All-Star Wrestling are carpenters, roofers and office workers, but by night they are a brotherhood of giants, heroes and villains. A misfit bunch clad in spandex, feather boas and studded leather, the members in this small professional wrestling community entertain screaming crowds once a month on a humble stage at the Moose Lodge in St. Albans. This amateur wrestling group is the subject of our upcoming exhibit, Hitting the Mat, which features still imagery, audio soundscapes, and video by Burlington Free Press staff photographer, Emily McManamy.

EXHIBITION / The exhibit opened at the Vermont Folklife Center’s Vision & Voice Gallery in October 2014, and available to travel to traditional and non-traditional exhibit spaces around the state.

PROGRAMMING / Public presentation and panel discussion by the photographer and the wrestlers.
Hitting the Mat *Exhibit Specifications*

**Description**

Vivid photographs and audio interviews meld with ambient soundscapes and a looping compilation of B-roll-type film clips, offering a diverse invitation to join the crowd, enter the ring, or even sneak behind-the-scenes of this high-energy, physical and performance-based brand of wrestling. Bold personas and spectacular public moments are counterbalanced by quieter, more intimate ones—thanks in no small part to Emily McManamy's abilities as a storyteller and the relationships she built over time to become a trusted, albeit temporary, insider.

Viewed through the lens of ethnographic inquiry every group forms its own distinctive community, each with its own set of values, specialized language, rituals and norms of behavior. This is as true of a military unit as it is of a quilting group, a motorcycle “gang,” or a group of semi-pro wrestlers. For members of the group those things that bind them together may seem completely unremarkable or even be invisible. But for an outside observer who is approaching them with fresh eyes every aspect of their experience can be new and full of interest. McManamy’s work documenting the Slam All-Star Wrestlers of Franklin County, Vermont, brings much that is extraordinary clearly into view.

**Content**

Photographs - 32 color pigment prints in three sizes--20 in x 30 in, 14 in x 20 in, 12 in x 17 in--depicting the wrestlers in preparation, behind the scenes, in the ring, as well as the crowd and contextual environment.

Audio Soundscape - A looping nine minute “soundscape” of ambient audio compiled from audio recorded during a wrestling match, including crowd cheering, announcer, wrestler banter, and the sounds the wrestlers hitting the mat and ropes--add an auditory component to the visual storyline represented in the photos.

Audio Interview Excerpts - Thirteen interview excerpts from two wrestlers cover a range of subjects surrounding the sport and the community that forms around it--excerpts range from approximately 30 seconds to 3 minutes. Excerpts delivered via a cell phone call-in system--OnCell.

Film - A looping seven minute film compiled from B-roll-type film shots complements the photography and audio by showing the viewer the more quiet/intimate moments between wrestlers and in the crowd.

*Reference the following pages to see photographs and audio panels.*

**Public Programming**

Artist Talk - Media artist, Emily McManamy speaks to the inspiration, process, and culmination of the project.

Wrestler Panel / Q&A - Project participants discuss their experiences with the sport and the community, as well as the perceptions/misconceptions about wrestling in the community at-large.

**Exhibit Press**


**Fees**

The exhibit is available for loan for a fee to be negotiated based on the unique conditions of each host.
Exhibit Content *Photographs*

All photographs full color, inkjet prints, mounted on gator board and laminated with semi-gloss archival laminate.

LARGE SIZE: 20in. x 30in. - 11 photographs
Exhibit Content *Photographs* (continued)
All photographs full color, inkjet prints, mounted on gator board and laminated with semi-gloss archival laminate.

MEDIUM SIZE: 14in. x 20in. - 16 photographs
Exhibit Content *Photographs* (continued)

All photographs full color, inkjet prints, mounted on gator board and laminated with semi-gloss archival laminate.

SMALL SIZE: 14in. x 20in. - 18 photographs
Everything seemed so larger than life...it just seemed, as a child, so unattainable to actually become a pro wrestler.

- Mark Laroche

"We call each other brother."

- Mark Laroche

It takes a lot out of me, but I'm going to do it until I feel I can't perform.

- Mark Laroche

You're never going to be paying your mortgage with professional wrestling payouts.

- Mark Laroche

I just kinda let my chest hair be shown. I'm the Northern Studd, that's part of my thing.

- Mark Laroche

Unless someone approaches me about professional wrestling, I don't generally bring it up to people I don't know.

- Mark Laroche

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- Mark Laroche
I wrestle because I love it.
- Mark Laroche

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 707

I really have a hard time describing it to people because if you don’t have a passion for it, you definitely won’t understand.
- Mark Laroche

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 708

Wrestling kinda has a bad rap.
- Mark Laroche

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 709

It puts me right into that trance...
Fifteen minutes, that’s my time.
- Justin Lussier

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 710

There’s a lot of professionalism, there’s a lot of details.
- Justin Lussier

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 711

Watch that little four-year-old boy in the front row have his eyes light up like they never have before...
- Justin Lussier

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 712

I said, ‘Oh boy, what did I get myself into now.’
- Justin Lussier

To hear this audio interview excerpt, use your phone to call (802) 922-9259, then dial the following extension: 713