



DEAR FRIENDS,

I imagine that 2020 was an incredibly challenging year for you. So many experienced illness, loss, separation from loved ones,

and painful evidence of how much inequality still exists in our world. You might wonder if anything good came out of this year. Personally, I would give a resounding Yes. Here in Vermont, our arts and nonprofit partners came together in new ways, and our community supported their efforts with extraordinary generosity.

I'm particularly proud of the accomplishments of SVAC this past year. We opened our doors safely to give our visitors and members a message of hope and resilience through our exhibitions. We created customized camps for the children of teachers and school staff needing to ready their own classrooms for safe reopening. We turned our 100-acre campus into a programmatic space for classes, story walks, and performances. And, when our staff learned that art teachers were struggling to provide art supplies in this new environment of no-shared-materials, they created art backpacks filled with art supplies and lessons from our artist faculty — ultimately serving hundreds of students in our community.

I am equally proud and gratified at how our community gave so generously to support SVAC this year. Donors gave early to support our efforts. New donors came into the fold. We finished the renovation of the new curATE café with the support of our community. Area foundations and businesses sponsored our programs. Members near and far contributed to our overall health.

I hope you take a moment to read through the pages of this Annual Report and celebrate the successes that *you* made possible. Celebrate the good that came out of this year. As I write this letter, we are finalizing the details of our plans for the summer, which include our own programming along with expanded performances with Manchester Music Festival. In addition, we are delighted to announce that we will host the Dorset Theatre Festival's outdoor season on SVAC's campus.

I look forward to seeing you up on the hill and sharing even more ways that SVAC will engage with our community.

Thank you,

Bob Van Degna Board President SVAC is grateful for the leadership of its

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At SVAC, we aren't discovering vaccines or saving lives. But we have heard from you this year that on our best

days, we help *change* lives. We strive to do so with our exhibitions and our programs on campus — and, as of 2020, online as well. This report describes our effort to offer more, to give more, and ultimately to mean more than ever to our community during this year of extraordinary suffering and upheaval.

Misoo Bang's portraits, in our *Women Take Wilson* series, featured survivors of sexual assault. When one of the subjects saw the portrait of herself for the first time, she said, "I feel empowered and energized and inspired to be the warrior that Misoo created — capturing an inner spirit that indeed has more than survived. This is life-changing." A work of art returned to her, and to many women like her, both confidence and power.

In the following pages we have tried to tell important stories:

- Visitors moved by seeing art destigmatizing mental illness
- Students benefiting from scholarships that allowed them to participate in class
- Parents who needed a safe place for their children to come as they prepared their own workplaces for safe reopening
- Performers and patrons who relished the opportunity to perform or hear live music once again
- Children donning layers of clothing to participate in an outdoor Halloween

This Annual Report is a testament to what the arts can bring to its community. It is also a testament to what a generous community can achieve. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to each and every donor, member, sponsor, and grantmaker who helped SVAC meet its mission — and sometimes, change lives for the better.

Thank you,

Anne Corso

Executive Director

In spite of the pandemic, 2020 has been a transformative year of emergence and renewal for Southern Vermont Arts Center.



During the winter season, SVAC connected with its year-round community not only via education programs and exhibitions, but also by creating and hosting various events with community partners. Students from Burr and Burton Academy performed their spring "Prisms" concert in the Arkell Pavilion; SVAC hosted a lecture for Green Mountain Academy for Lifelong Learning featuring Shelburne Museum's Associate Curator, Katie Wood Kirchhoff; local chefs brought their best soups and chowders for the Dorset Equine Rescue's fundraiser the "Chowder Challenge;" and we hosted local innkeepers for our newly annual Innkeepers' Reception.







MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE EXHIBITION

Facing stigma and **challenging expectations** of what mental illness "looks like" through art

We opened our doors during the winter season and featured *I Am More: Facing Stigma*, Yellow Tulip Project's photography exhibition in Yester House. The exhibition featured black and white portraits, captured by Maine photographer **Lissy Thomas**, of people dealing with mental health challenges personally or through the experiences of family or friends. The individuals–musicians, artists, nature lovers, parents, and more–are dedicated to challenging assumptions and stigma around mental illness and what mental illness "looks like."

SVAC featured complementary exhibitions including **Gisela Gamper**, renowned photographer, who documented her personal journey of love and mourning her husband's passing through self-portraits; Bennington College Visiting Professor **Terry Boddie**'s series *Blueprints* that took a complex approach to the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, pairing it with modern mass incarceration; and **Carl Austin Hyatt**, nationally recognized photographer, who showed portraits made from two decades of travels in the Andes of Peru.

The art therapy group Forty-Seven Main Street Artists Group captured the inspirational power of abstract self-expression in paint. In mixed media portraits, students from area schools presented themselves as they wanted to be seen. United Counseling Service staff and clients contributed self-portrait photographs and written statements about their journeys.

Partnering with local schools and health agencies to offer panels, gallery talks by artists, and family activities, SVAC successfully served 946 youth and adults and 8 out of 14 VT counties.

"Our role in curating this exhibition was to create an opportunity for art to inspire connections and conversations. The exhibition provided space to come together, which is at the center of our mission." — ANNE CORSO, SVAC'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"I am more than a dress size;" "I am more than my cancer;" "I am more than past trauma"

— COMMENTS VISITORS

SHARED IN THE

EXHIBITION'S RESPONSE

GALLERY

ART ONLINE: Transformative Learning

Sparking creativity and connection virtually in the local and national community

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, SVAC transformed its in-person workshops, classes, and camps into innovative online learning spaces. We offered a wide range of programming, including drawing film stills, painting with watercolor and sumi ink, hand spinning fiber into yarn, photography, camps for youth in animation and mixed media, artist lectures and panels, a community conversation about the documentary *The Artist and the Astronaut*, and a literary discussion about three memoirs of women in the arts. During this challenging time, we saw the impact of art in all forms for artists, individuals, children and families--and its ability to serve as an outlet for self-expression.



SVAC received tremendous support from sponsors and foundations and partnered with incredible schools and local organizations including Burr and Burton Academy, Community Food Cupboard, Earthrise Films, Hullabaloo Danceshop, Merwin Studios, Northshire Day School, Red Fox Community School, Shaftsbury Elementary School, and Taconic Music. Bringing the essence of the arts center directly to homes, SVAC reached over 1000 participants.



"My girls and I had a BLAST painting together at home. It will certainly be remembered in our family as a happy memory of being home together during an otherwise difficult time."

"Thank you for this opportunity. I have been pretty isolated since February when they discovered lung cancer. Operation to remove part of lung and am really on the mend. This is a wonderful way to get me back in the "swing" of things."

"I am so glad to see you are offering online courses during this time. I normally would not have been able to attend them in person, since I live in Sparta, NJ. Now, I am meeting others in the community, developing a skill and being taught by a professional. Thank you."

"I really love the video you created, and I posted it on our classroom's remote learning site to share with our families.

Thank you for helping us to continue to connect through art even while we are apart!"



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THE ART OF OUTDOORS

As the weather warmed up, SVAC geared up its outdoor spaces to be used safely for visitors. Requiring masks and ensuring physical distancing, we offered programs and events that included film screenings on the Arkell Lawn, an evening concert with Maxine Linehan and friends, Taconic Music's violin performance, chamber music performances, Manchester Music Festival's digital concert series, and camps and workshops in plein air painting, lantern-making, circus adventures, photography, sculpture, and theater.







ARTFUL CUISINE: curATE café

Beautifully renovated for an elevated dining

experience and making weddings, receptions, meetings, and special occasions **a masterpiece**

"curATE is the union of food, art and nature. Offering select foods surrounded by intriguing works of art with sweeping mountain views, it is the newest artistic endeavor at SVAC."

— LAUREN BRYANT, PROPRIETOR, CHURCH STREET HOSPITALITY



Located in historic Yester House, curATE café is an iconic addition to SVAC's property. While the restaurant had undergone several iterations over the years, the new space went through a grand renovation and expansion. With the planning and building expertise of BreadLoaf architects, the café has now doubled in existing dining space. The 950-square-foot restaurant pairs modern amenities such as all-season heating and air conditioning, a custom six-seat patron bar, new windows, lighting, flooring and furnishings--while honoring historic details such as the 1917 tiled fireplace, exterior clapboards and hardware. The renovation also features expanded patio seating with a view to the mountains and rotating art displays in its interior.

curATE café comes to SVAC in partnership with Church Street Hospitality, known for their acclaimed establishments, Barrows House Inn & Restaurant, The Dorset Inn, The Publyk House, and Dorset Bakery & Café. curATE will bring a modern sensibility paired with classic and regional fare. During the day, patrons can enjoy small plates, salads, artisanal sandwiches, homemade baked goods, gourmet coffee beverages; and for dinner, curATE will offer a unique culinary approach to the best ingredients Vermont has to offer.

curATE café will delight diners enjoying the museum's art and beautiful grounds. The café will serve as a destination for dining, community gatherings, and private events.

WOMEN TAKE WILSON EXHIBITION

In honor of 100 years of women's constitutional right to vote, and in celebration of extraordinary women artists



"I feel empowered and energized and inspired to be the warrior that Misoo created - capturing an inner spirit that indeed has more than survived. This is life-changing."

— CAROLE, UPON SEEING HER OWN PORTRAIT IN MISOO BANG'S GIANTESS SERIES

Through sheer scale and use of power tools, confronting art that is traditionally seen as a female medium, changing myths around Asian stereotypes and giving voice to sexual abuse survivors, and highlighting the importance of women's role in history, Misoo Bang, Lauren Booth, Adrien Broom, Patty Hudak, Chalice Mitchell, and Sarah Tortora all reclaimed narratives of what an artist can do in SVAC's Women Take Wilson exhibition.

A sea of sixteen giant women loomed large in the Wilson galleries this summer. The *Giantess* series, by artist Misoo Bang, featured her own oversized image as well as those of fellow survivors of sexual abuse, to reclaim their power. Bang was one of the six women artists featured in the *Women Take Wilson* exhibition series — a series that celebrated women artists in 2020, a year to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment. *Monumental: Misoo Bang and Sarah Tortora* paired Bang's painted and collaged canvases with Philadelphia artist Sarah Tortora's





sculptures, which hearkened back to ancient Greek painting and architecture. Lauren Booth's exhibition, *Happy*, featured Booth's whimsical sculptures and neon works, and spilled out into the landscape with an installation that cloaked 32 trees with hand-knitted scarves.

The second installation of *Women Take Wilson* featured internationally known photographer Adrien Broom's dream-like images, Vermont Art Council Creation Grant awardee Patty Hudak's massive fabric installation, and Chalice Mitchell's figurative paintings which blended influences of Renaissance iconography with Japanese brush painting.

The celebration of women's creative achievements inspired much of SVAC's public and educational programming. Intimate "Ladies' Nights" events allowed SVAC's Executive Director, Anne Corso, to take visitors on an art walk of the *Women Take Wilson* exhibitions. Virtual "Meet the Artist" discussions with exhibiting artists Chalice Mitchell, Patty Hudak, and Adrien Broom allowed audience members to get an inside view of the artists' creative process. An outdoor film series included the little-known story of women's baseball in *A League of Their Own*; and biopics *Toni Morrison: Pieces of Me* and *Amazing Grace* featured author and poet Toni Morrison and legendary singer, Aretha Franklin. Middlebury College professor **Megan Mayhew Berman**, led a book discussion *Reading Strong Women* in which she considered the lives of Francoise Gilot, Jesmyn Ward, and Sally Mann. SVAC's Story Walk project placed oversized installations of children's literature by women authors, with the central theme of girls' empowerment. An uplifting concert by vocal powerhouse **Maxine Linehan** was one of SVAC's most memorable outdoor performances.

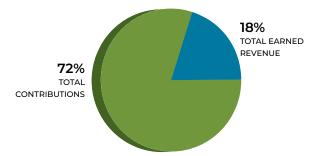
Like many other institutions during the pandemic, SVAC saw a downturn in its earned revenue last year. That said, revenue actuals during the full year were \$773,486, which was remarkably close to budget (\$773,700). A \$157,381 shortfall in programming income was offset by a \$137,850 excess in the annual fund, which totaled \$462,850 against a plan of \$325,000. Other notable differences during the year as a whole were stronger-than-expected art sales, at \$37,245; and stronger grant and bequest revenues, at \$155,444. In short, the generosity of the community truly lifted up SVAC financially.

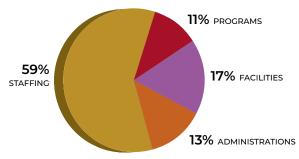
Overall, cost-cutting measures due to the pandemic had a dramatic impact. Annual administrative expenses were \$690,433 (\$154,520 below plan); while other expenses came in \$16,367 below plan, for overall annual expenses of \$861,375.

Not reflected on the Income Statement are the following: SVAC received \$79,400 from the Paycheck Protection Program and \$6,000 from the SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan, both of which have been forgiven. We were grateful to receive a further \$185,341 from the community to complete the café and other capital improvements.

TOTAL INCOME	\$773,486
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	622,644
Sponsorship & Scholarship Fund	4,351
Grants & Restricted Gifts	155,444
Annual Fund	\$ 462,849
CONTRIBUTIONS	
TOTAL EARNED REVENUE	\$ 150,842
Interest	927
Membership	38,534
Programs	\$ 111,381
EARNED REVENUE	

EXPENSES	
Programs	\$ 97,840
Facilities	142,910
Administration	114,264
Staffing	506,361
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 861,375
Operating Loss	-\$87,889
. 9	
Endowment Draw	
Endowment Draw to Support Operations	\$87,889









VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEART AND SOUL OF SVAC

SVAC is indebted to the volunteers who so generously give of their time and talent. In 2020, our volunteers mounted exhibitions in Yester House and the Wilson Museum, decorated and organized for Halloween on the Hill, catalogued our library holdings, and assisted with family events. Some have volunteered their services on committees and taught classes and workshops. Others provide professional services such as legal services, financial expertise, photography, and videography. Overall, our volunteers have dedicated thousands of hours of service to SVAC. **We couldn't do it without you!**

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We are so very grateful to our donors and members who have held our vision of the Southern Vermont Arts Center. We have endeavored to accurately acknowledge your

names and constribution. Many thanks for your continuing support. - ANNE CORSO

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