

**VASSAR
COLLEGE
LIFELONG
LEARNING
INSTITUTE**

**NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 12 JUN 2024**

VASSAR COLLEGE LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

Newsletter Issue 12, June 2024

Continuous Living



...the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin / growing over whatever winter did to us, a return /
to the strange idea of continuous living despite / the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then. /
I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf / unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.
--Ada Limon, "Instructions on Not Giving Up"

After the darkness of the winter months, with the return to LLI classes in March, I felt like a leaf unfurling in the light. I allowed myself to let in fresh thoughts, be amid expectant faces, and move in different dimensions, what Poet Laureate Ada Limon calls *continuous living*—saying “*Yes!*” to life, in spite of its difficulties and challenges.

I began by immersing myself in the lyrical light and exquisite riddles of Emily Dickinson, with the helpful insights of presenter Judith Saunders. I tried to absorb the scientific labyrinths of RNA, saliva, salmon spines, and bird brains in the Science Sampler courses, taught by Vassar faculty. (See p.8.) I indulged in the wonder of colors, textures, and lines of paintings, sculpture, and fashion in two art courses, one presented by John McNiff, the other by David Roberts. (See p.10.) I watched and recognized myself in the film, *I Like It Here*, Ralph Arlyck’s poignant documentary on aging and a retrospective of his life. (See p.20.)

In addition to the emergence of more light and greenery, nature surprised us with two rare events for our region. As I sat in class in Room 216, Kenyon Hall, at 10:23 am, on Friday, April 5th, while we were discussing “Wild nights! Wild nights!” by Emily Dickinson, I heard a loud rumble and felt the room shake. All conversation stopped, our mouths opened in awe, and maybe a little fear, as it slowly dawned on us that this was an earthquake. Three days later I viewed the partial eclipse, amazed at how, with only a slim crescent of sun showing, the light was strong and hardly dimmed.

At our annual end-of-the-year party, we celebrated the fact that all of us—students, presenters, and facilitators—said “*Yes!*” to another year of LLI!

It was a rich spring session for me, and apparently for others too, as evidenced by the articles and photos that follow, each highlighting the various ways we engage in *continuous living* through VCLLI.

THANK YOU to all who said “*Yes!*” when asked to contribute to the newsletter.

Special thanks to our cover artist, **Marty Zlotkin**, and to our proofreader, **Sandy Corwin**.

Jo Hausam, Editor, *VCLLI Newsletter*

Make the Most of the Vassar Campus



Eat at the **All Campus Dining Center** (formerly ACDC and the Deece, now renamed Gordon Commons).

Take advantage of the all-you-can-eat \$12 lunches.



Discover the stunning beauty of the **Frederick Ferris Thompson Memorial Library**, considered one of the most beautiful libraries in the world.

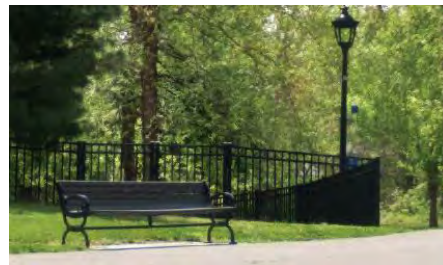


Explore the **Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center**, familiarly called The Loeb.

From its founding gift by Matthew Vassar in 1864, the collection has grown to over 22,000 works of art.



Wander the walkways, **relax** on the benches, and **admire** the landscape. More than 200 species of trees comprise the vast arboretum of the Vassar campus.



Sign up for **Vassar Events**: <https://www.vassar.edu/news/events/vassarevents>.
An email, sent directly to you, is circulated each week while classes are in session.

**Food + Drink + Conversation + Words of Appreciation =
Happy Faces at the End-of-the-Year Party**

Photos by **Marian Pompa and Diana Salsberg**



Organized by
Diana Salsberg
and **Teresa Quinn**

Catered by Main Course



Friday, May 3, 2024
Ely Hall (aka Aula)



Vice-Chair, **Neila Radin**, and Committee Chairs (**Maribeth King, Rob Cohen, Sybil DelGaudio, Tim Ryan**)
named and thanked volunteers.

THANK YOU

to the volunteers who said “Yes!” to being a

CLASS MANAGER

for the Spring 2024 Semester



Madaleine Cole

Nancy Stevens

Skip Weisman

Patricia Fitzpatrick

Cary Phillips Auerbach

David Bloom

Donna Thomas

Linda Cohen

Gala Leganof

Rob Cohen

Rachael Reisman

Mary Anne Williams

Celia Serotsky

Angela Quartararo

Joette Kane

Beth Hayes

Marian Pompa

Sara Thompson

Linda Heitmann

Miriam Tannen

Terri Quinn

Kathleen Crampton

Muriel Horowitz

Tim Ryan

Susan Fink

Howard Spilke

Patti Wineapple

Regina Klein

Edward Hogarty

Maureen Potter

Theresa Bracchi

How Much Do You Know about VCLLI?

1. What was enrollment for the past two semesters? a) 285 b) 325 c) 305
2. When did VCLLI begin? a) 2016 b) 2017 c) 2018
3. How old must you be to join? a) 50 b) 55 c) 60
4. Who is the LLI worker who gets paid? a) Mihai Grunfeld b) Rachel Etkin c) Sudhir Desai
5. What is Moodle? a) A word game b) A website for sharing resources c) A film podcast
6. How often is the newsletter published? a) Once a month b) Twice a year c) Whenever the editor decides
7. What is a characteristic of a lifetime learner? a) A high IQ b) Self-motivated c) Competitive
8. Who founded VCLLI? a) Matthew Vassar b) Mihai Grunfeld c) Elizabeth Bradley
9. What class registration software does VCLLI use? a) CourseStorm b) ProClass c) Ragpack
10. When does VCLLI accept new membership applications? a) All summer b) June c) September

Lunch & Learn: A New Concept for LLI

by **Jo Hausam**



*Through the efforts of **Pam Porath**, LLI's DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion) Chair, a new concept was introduced at the end of the 2024 Spring Semester: **Lunch & Learn**. It offered LLI members an extra, informal learning experience during the lunch hours on Friday.*

The first session, on April 26th, featured

Deidra “Jen” Brown

Deidra “Jen” Brown spoke about **the historical perspective of racism and bias in Poughkeepsie**. She is an attorney who completed certification in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion from the University of Southern Florida in 2021. Her law practice in Poughkeepsie is limited to representing citizens who have experienced discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, gender, age, or disability.

Janet Caruso attended the session and thought “the presentation was thorough and interesting”. She reported to me that the discussion began with Jen explaining the Race Unity Circle, which believes in one race: the human race. It meets monthly to study and discuss racial issues in the Poughkeepsie community.

The group was asked to answer questions digitally (photo below), followed by a discussion.



Photos by **Tim Ryan**.



Then, looking at maps, all could see the instances of redlining (historic race-based exclusionary tactics in real estate) and biased zoning in Poughkeepsie. There are vast differences between the North and the South sides of the city. One decision, by the Poughkeepsie Planning Commission, which deepened the economic and social divide, was the construction of the East/West Arterial. It was designed not for city residents, but for town and out-of-town people to use to zip through the city.

Janet Caruso thought Jen Brown “was an excellent speaker and presenter”.



The second session, on May 3rd, featured

Ashley Riker

Using the **Understanding our Social Identities** module, she guided participants through a process of assessing their own biases, looking at our own power and privilege.

Ashley Riker has worked in the non-profit and public service fields for fifteen years and is currently the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion at the Hudson Valley Credit Union. She also serves on the board of the New Paltz Pride Coalition and is an active member of the Orange County Chamber of Commerce.

The class began by each of us stating our name and one fact about ourselves. This led us to consider how we think about ourselves as unique human beings and as a part of groups. Using a list of social identities (i.e. ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.), we were asked to consider the identities we think about all the time, occasionally, and the least (those we don't worry about). Considering this was an audience of seniors, all of us listed Age and Ability as identities we think about all the time.

We concluded we all have biases, and this is OK. But reacting to them is not OK. Prejudice plus action equals discrimination. Social power plus discrimination equals oppression.

Discussion was lively and as a result we ran out of time before Ashley could finish the presentation.



Photos by Jo Hausam

Both sessions were well-attended and, hopefully, we will have more Lunch & Learn events.

In spite of the title, please note, lunch should be eaten **prior** to the session since it is held in a classroom.



Praise for the Courses & Presenters

Wise Aging
by Diane Boujikian

I LOVED the Wise Aging class. LOVED!!

[This course was taught by multiple presenters: **Linda Cantor, Sandy Corwin, Marge Groten, Muriel Horowitz, Julie Kessler and Mimi Tannen.**]

I also heard there was possibly a chance for a CHAIR YOGA CLASS. Got my vote.

The Fairy Tale Experience
by Jill Braver

Patty Kane Horrigan is an incredible teacher. She knows her subject matter inside and out. In fact, for our last session, she offered to find a fairy tale that she had never read, and ultimately did find one, but it took her some time as she is intimately familiar with the topic.

I took the course because I assumed I had some familiarity with fairy tales and that they would give me a foundation for this course. It turns out that as a boomer my idea of fairy tale was mostly Disney and that the reality goes so much deeper and does not always have a happy ending.

Patty encouraged us to think outside the box and created and shared a summary after the end of each session recapping our discussion. I have not known many, if any, teachers who provided that extra piece.

We asked her if she would consider doing a Fairy tales part 2 class. I suspect she has enough on her plate without that, but I for one would welcome another 8 weeks!

The Poetry of Emily Dickinson
photos and comments by **Roseanne Ashby**



This is Judith Saunders who taught *The Poetry of Emily Dickinson*.



She is so animated in class.



Here are a few photos in a row to illustrate that. It is hard to get the full impression from one isolated shot.



She is absolutely marvelous.

Also~Rans: Four Men Who Ran for President and Lost
by Herman Harmelink

Sandra Opdycke's lectures are always so good that I just look for her name and sign up.

Her four also~rans were two Democrats and two Republicans (William Jennings Bryan, Al Smith, Thomas Dewey, and Barry Goldwater). She made them more interesting than many more recent candidates.

History of Our Times: Social Change and Resistance
by Lauren Van Kirk

History of Our Times: Social Change and Resistance, presented by **Miriam Cohen**, with **Muriel W. Horowitz** as class organizer, was just what I was hoping for, and the timing of the class was perfect.

We were offered interesting material to read which began with Senator Eugene McCarthy's speech, in which he highlights the total collapse of the U.S. from radical communists and their sympathizers and ended with Trump's campaign announcement speech, where he blames the "illegal Mexicans" for the country's demise.

I was impressed how Ms. Cohen brought class discussion back to the reading material offered in the class.

It is so important to understand the past. Mark Twain said, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes." And it certainly seems that now the U.S. and the world seem to be playing the same old and very scary tune.

I look forward to future classes with Ms. Cohen and Vassar College Lifelong Learning Institute.

Four Great Film Scores from the Golden Age of Hollywood
photos and comment by **Gala Leganof**



"Fantastic class!"

In this course, **Brian Mann** focused on the role that music plays in films, specifically *Casablanca* (1941, score by Max Steiner); *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946, score by Hugo Friedhofer); *Sunset Boulevard* (1950, score by Franz Waxman), and *Vertigo* (1958, score by Bernard Herrmann).



Science Sampler

by David Wise

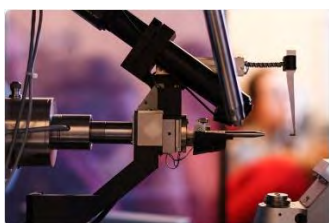
Do you like surprises? How about a little adventure? Are you naturally curious? If you answered “yes” to any of those questions, Version 7 of the Vassar Science Sampler was made for you.

The course featured 8 weeks (okay, 7, as one presenter unexpectedly needed to cancel) of diverse topics from widely varied scientific disciplines. Perusing the course catalog, some of the topics sounded rather abstract, and maybe even a little intimidating. I mean, really, who spends much time thinking about a salmon’s backbone, except for Mr. or Ms. Salmon?



Photo source: <https://www.salon.com/2017/08/23/in-alaska-a-new-life-for-old-bones/>

But ‘fun’ and ‘intriguing’ accurately describe all the presentations and even seem like understatements.



Each week brought us a different faculty member* from one of Vassar College’s science departments, and their passion for their topics was apparent. Their presentations were detailed yet clear and user-friendly.

Prior to attending Dr. Tanski’s presentation, it seemed a bit of a stretch that a topic as esoteric sounding as single crystal X-ray crystallography could be explained in a concise and manageable fashion in 75 minutes.

An x-ray crystallography machine. Photo source: <https://www.news-medical.net/life-sciences/What-is-X-ray-Crystallography.aspx>

After learning about the role of saliva composition in our ability to taste, one of our fellow students, **Steve Rant**, provided us with test swabs. We each learned whether or not we were super tasters.

Each week brought a new experience that did not disappoint and that opened our minds to aspects of our world we had not been aware of.

And I should add a plug for class manager **David Bloom**, whose friendly, humorous manner was a pleasant start each week.

*** Thanks to our Vassar science teachers:**

**Alaina Richard, John Long, Mary Ann Cunningham,
Colin Aitken, Kelli Duncan, Glenn Roy, Joseph Tanski**



The Bridge for Laboratory Sciences at Vassar
<https://www.vassar.edu/stories/2016/161101-bridge.html>

Drawing from Nature

by **Howard Spilke**

On beautiful spring days, members of the class, *Drawing from Nature*, went outside to engage in the experience of *drawing from nature*.

Before venturing outdoors, our artist instructor, **Carol DiPalo**, discussed drawing technique and the challenge of translating 3-Dimensional objects to a 2-Dimensional surface. Once outside, Carol would attend to each of us with individual instruction.

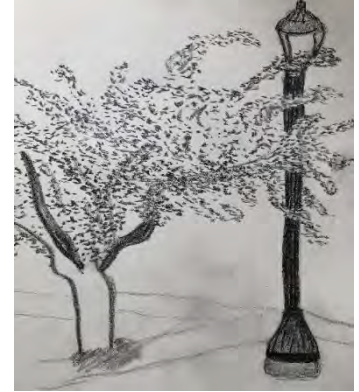
At the last class, each student had the opportunity to present and discuss their drawings.

Here are a few examples. Photos submitted by **Linda Cohen**. (Artists wish to remain anonymous.)



In addition to improving artistic skills, the act of transferring our perceptions to paper exercises our brain and enhances our creativity, as well as aiding us with general problem solving.

Carol DiPalo is an accomplished mixed media artist and master art educator. As stated in her bio: *Her love of and connection with nature are at the forefront of her creativity.*



The Poetry of Peace

by **Carmen James-Lawrence**

“...I come into the presence of still water / and I feel above me the day-blind stars / waiting with their light. For a time / I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.”

From the *Peace of Wild Things* by Wendell Berry

I first met our presenter, **Marcy Heidish Dolan**, an award-winning author of 18 books of fiction, non-fiction and poetry, in the 2023 Spring term. Her course on *Accessible Poetry* was so delightful that I returned this spring for another serving!

This year’s class, *The Poetry of Peace*, was indeed a fulfilling, inspirational, and from time to time, an emotionally reflective experience.

Over the course of four classes, we were Marcy’s guests, invited to share in brief interludes with William Butler Yeats, Rumi, Maya Angelou, Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver, Robert Frost, Thomas Merton, Seamus Heaney, Langston Hughes, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jan Richardson and more. In the examination of the facets of peace, we took note of the poetic presence of peace “in nature, in places, in people, time and paradox”.

The thing about poetry, for me at least, is its almost mystical power to transport one into a state of wonder, contemplation and curiosity. From what hushed or exuberant chorus in one’s soul do the words come forth? What music or language do we hear? One might be reminded of a sweet fragrance or nostalgic taste. Poetry is not for everyone; it may not move your earth. Even so, it always seems to bring *something to someone* in an “*oh my*” kind of way. For a few early Spring Tuesdays, *The Poetry of Peace* sat me down in my easy chair. Peace.



Shining a light on Presenter David Roberts

A Lifetime Learning and Advancing His Art of Costume Designing

by Jo Hausam

David Roberts and I had planned to meet in the Kenyon lobby for my interview with him. Alas, the door was locked. He then invited me to his home. Seated in a comfortable chair on his cozy back porch, sipping lemonade, with the company of his two cats, I asked him about his life and his work as a costume designer. This was so much better than the Kenyon lobby.

David was born in Syracuse, NY, and went to SUNY New Paltz to study art. (Coincidentally, we were there at exactly the same time, but did not know each other.) In his first year on campus, he found himself designing a set for the performance of *Turandot*, which led him to focus his sights on work in the theater.



After graduating, he worked in both the Luckey Platt and Wallace's department stores in Poughkeepsie, where he had the chance to design a window display, until he received an offer for a job as an office manager for a costume company in NYC. In time, he became what is called "a shopper", the person who scouts around and buys fabrics, working in conjunction with the designers and the drapers. He learned to differentiate fabric by its feel.

This evolved into becoming an expeditor, someone who follows the project through its many steps, thereby learning many skills along the way. Theater costumes receive the full treatment that is followed by haute couture. They must be top quality. There is no cutting corners on these garments. Next fall, David will be offering a course on how costumes are made.

When his boss was hired as a designer by the Metropolitan Opera, David was able to go with him. He worked at the Met for three years, "until," he says, "my boss was fired for going over budget." His next stop was working in a very large costume company that made costumes for many venues, including the circus.



Old / New

His freelance work took him to Rio de Janeiro, Jerusalem, San Diego, and Boston. He also spent time as a shopper for *The Muppet Show* ("the benefits were great!"). In addition, he worked in an embroidery shop, where he programmed computers to facilitate machine-generated embroidery. As a result of this, embroidery became a hobby. The photo on the left shows how he replicated a pattern from a vintage chair.

In 2009 he began teaching at the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC, where he taught the history of fashion. He also taught at Montclair State University in New Jersey, teaching courses such as *A Survey of Decorative Arts*. In 2017 he was offered a position at Marist College. When that ended, he returned to FIT, where he still teaches.

Three years ago he began sharing his multi-faceted artistic expertise at Marist's Continuing Lifetime Studies program. A year and a half later he joined VCLLL, teaching *The History of American Style*. In the 2024 Spring Semester he taught *Orientalism in Art* and *Fashion and Art*. He also gives classes, such as *The Golden Age of Illustration*, at the Boardman Road Library.



I asked, what do you do for fun? "I love doing research." He also likes to cook, embroider, and listen to classical music. As a child he played Mozart's "Turkish Rondo" over and over. And, of course, there's opera. "I'm interested in the drama."

He acknowledges that he is "blessed with an incredible memory" and he loves finding associations between things. "I love drawing parallels." He believes knowledge needs to be shared and he enjoys sharing it.

He's received a good response from LLI members—"I heard your classes are fantastic!"—and he says this is affirming for him. "People have been gracious." He said, "Sybil [Del Gaudio] has been one of my favorite supporters."

About teaching, he says, "It's important to have it be entertaining. If they [the students] enjoy it, they will learn."

David Roberts presented two entertaining four-week classes during the 2024 Spring Semester.

Orientalism in Art

This course surveyed how the Western world has viewed the "Mysterious East" in the arts, from the fantasies of Chinoiserie in the 18th century, the Orientalists painters of the 19th century, and the fascination with Japanese art after Japan was opened to international trade in 1858.

Photo by Gala Leganof



Fashion and Art

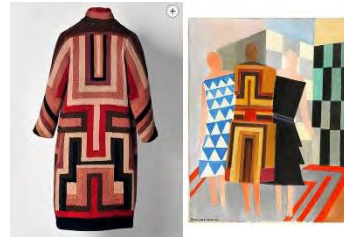


This course explored the connection between art history and fashion.

We looked at textiles and designs from Egyptian linen, to the velvet of the Middle Ages, to the silk of Japanese kimonos. We learned the origin of garments such as corsets, ruffs, doublets, paisley shawls, and sabots.

Did you know satin is a type of weave, not a fiber? And that fabric was slashed, punched, and stamped?

Artists, such as Sonia Delaunay, were painters **and** fashion designers.



Designers, such as Yves St. Laurent, have been inspired by famous works of art.



These are copies of David Robert's extensive slide collection, which effectively elucidated all the aspects of his presentation. His incredible memory, love for the subject, and wealth of experience awed us.

A Photo Array of the Splendors of Stonecrop Gardens



Photos by **Miriam Pompa, Sarah Kennedy, Diana Salsberg, Sara Moore, and Nancy Miller**

On April 24th, registered members of LLI went on a field trip to Stonecrop Gardens in Cold Spring, N.Y. **Diana Salsberg** scheduled the visit with a wonderful, knowledgeable guide and the morning proved to be an ideal spring outing for all. The group visited many different areas of Stonecrop including an alpine garden and greenhouses filled with wondrous flowering plants. It was a perfect time of year for this type of visit and a good time was had by all.

Written by **Diana Salsberg**





SPECIAL FICTION FEATURE

Marilyn Price's flash fiction piece, "A Special Page", was the 2024 Spring Semester's first original writing sample submitted, critiqued, and finalized in the VCLLI *Writing Fiction with Other Writers* course, led by **Roberta M. Roy**. (Read about her on p. 16.)

A Special Page by Marilyn Price

It was Christmas vacation. "Ellie, you know Aunt Faye and Cousin Rose will be here this afternoon".

"Good," said Ellie, smiling at Anna, her mom, and then she excitedly dashed to her room to get her new book, so she could show it to her cousin.

Rose and her cousin Ellie were the same age, having both been born a week apart of each other. They would soon be six and were to share their birthdays as one event in January.

"I wish I just had my own special party", Ellie thought, feeling cheated. "Dickie doesn't share his birthday! He has it all to himself, even a holiday from school sometimes, on November 2nd." Ellie felt a bit guilty about her resentment toward her older brother, her favorite playmate.

Aunt Faye and Cousin Rose arrived at noon. Rose was a placid, pretty child with a lovely pink complexion and curly light brown hair, whereas Ellie's hair was almost black, like Anna, her mom, with whom she shared the same olive-toned skin. And, whereas Anna had a lovely smile, which lit up her face, Aunt Faye had a pale drawn face with thin lips and hair she wore up in a tight bun that made her look even more severe.

Ellie was afraid of Aunt Faye because when she was at her cousin's apartment, she had seen her yell at Rose over practically nothing when Rose had accidentally spilled her glass of milk on the dining room table. Then Aunt Faye had got up from her chair and gone right to Rose, slapped her in the face, and called her a sloppy careless child. Rose had cried a little, and then remained completely silent during the rest of the meal.

After Aunt Faye and Rose arrived, the two girls went to Ellie's room to play. "Look," Ellie said as she took the book that she had lovingly placed on the bed earlier. "Mommy got me this great coloring book for Christmas. It is *Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs*," Ellie exclaimed with glee as she turned the pages to show the illustrations and story. "It has beautiful pictures, and we can color them, because they are all in black and white, just perfect."

As she looked at the book Rose seemed interested but made no comment.

"I also have this new set of crayons, with wonderful colors, and you can choose any picture you want to color, except this one, because it is so special, I am saving it to do later." Ellie showed Rose a full-page image of Snow White near a well.

"That's nice," Rose said. "I'll find something to color."

"Are you hungry?" asked Ellie, "I'm going to ask mommy when we are having lunch."

Ellie ran down the hall to the kitchen, where the two women were sipping coffee, smoking, and chatting. "Mom, when is lunch?" Ellie asked.

"Oh soon, I'll call you," Anna said waving her off.

Ellie ran back to see what Rose had colored. Rose was playing with the miniature kitchen set Ellie had also gotten for Christmas. Ellie picked up the book and flipped through it to see what Rose had colored. As she went past her special page, she saw that Rose had used a very dark crayon to scrawl across Snow White with ugly marks which practically made the image impossible to see. “Oh! How could you!” Ellie blurted out, and crying, she ran to the kitchen with the book, to show Anna what Rose had done.

After hearing Ellie out, her mother looked sympathetically at her, but before she could speak, Aunt Faye took the book and said, “That’s really too bad, but since Rose messed it up, why don’t I get you another one, and we’ll take this one.”

Terrified, Ellie looked at her mom with imploring eyes. “Please say no, please, please!” she thought, but did not say a word, because she was sure that Aunt Faye would never replace the book as promised.

Aunt Faye took the book, and as Ellie expected, she never replaced it. However, as Ellie had expected Aunt Faye’s failure to follow through on her word, it was not that, but her mother’s failure to intervene that was to become the betrayal she would never forget.

Marilyn Price is a painter, potter, and teacher—and now, we can add “writer”. She has been teaching art classes at VCLLI since its inception.

AMUSING MUSINGS

Incorruptibles by Maureen Rant

In *Mystical Italy*, a course presented by **Dr. Nathan Rosenblum**, we learned about the “incorruptibles.” These are the saints, or more specifically the remains of saints, which, when exhumed decades or even centuries after death, are found to have resisted decay. (I looked at several photos online, and all of the corpses look better after years in the ground than Keith Richards does today.) This amazes me, but I am not alone. Scientists are still studying this phenomenon, but there are no clear explanations for a body failing to decompose.

In short, incorruptibility remains a mystery, and maybe that is a good thing. It tells us that some answers may not be found in this realm, or, as Hamlet reminds his friend, “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

Works for me.

Editor’s Note:



Apologies to **Linda Rissotto**, the featured fiction writer in Issue 11, Jan. 2024. Her name was misspelled in the printed version of the newsletter.

The answers to **How Much Do You Know about VCLLL?** are all “b”.

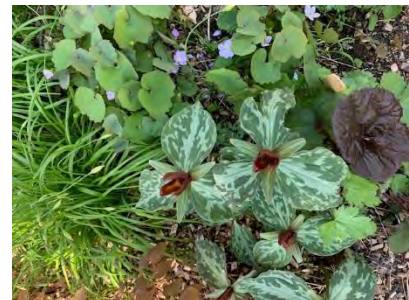


Photo by **Sarah Kennedy** taken at Stonecrop.



Shining a light on presenter
Roberta M. Roy, (who likes to be called Robin)
 in her own words...

A Reintegration of Self

by Roberta M. Roy



So much has happened in the last four years.

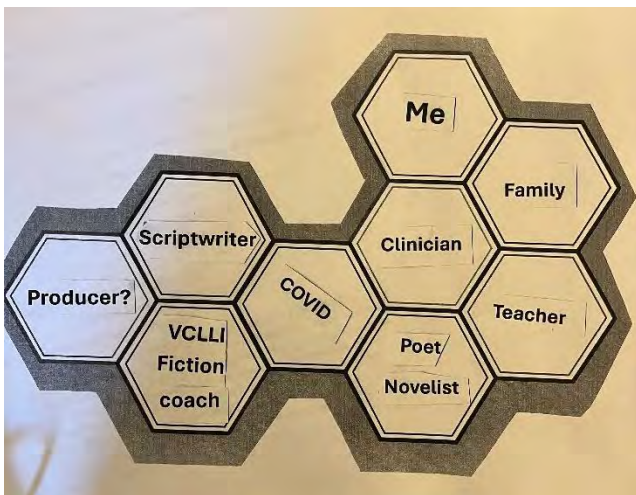


When COVID hit, in my desire to lessen the likelihood of my contracting it, I gave up my full-time face to face speech language therapy position and, relying upon the ideas in my award-winning novels in the *Jolt Survival Trilogy*, I became a scriptwriter. Essentially it was a reinvention of my former self. No longer a therapist/poet/novelist, I instead entered the world of theater.

Thereafter, for two years, I dedicated myself exclusively to the writing of scripts with the result that currently I have written the scripts for five features, fifteen-hour long episodes for a tele series, and five short scripts.

However, as COVID had become both preventable and treatable, I thought it was time to socialize more. Hmm. As such, I decided to try the Vassar College Lifelong Learning Institute where I signed up for fall and spring courses in the 2022-2023 school year.

It was there when my teacher, Mihai Grunfeld, suggested that perhaps I might teach a course in writing* and again the worm turned. First therapist, then therapist poet/novelist, then writing teacher/coach. But the worm would turn again. My need for answers drove me to relentlessly research the world situation, AI, and hexagonal learning, with the result that one day there came to me a sense of disassociation. Odd. Who was I? Why did I feel in pieces?



It was at that time that it occurred to me that perhaps the road to self-reintegration lay in applying hexagonal thinking to describe where I had been and how I had evolved. I did so, and these paragraphs are based on its results. And beyond that, I do feel more clearly defined and integrated than I did yesterday.

Yes. Here I am. A tele-therapist, scriptwriter, writing coach who continues to market her books while also seeking a producer for her scripts and along the way researching topics of interest—AI, hexagonal thinking, climate change, and who knows what next? Possibly the question of whether Australia really should consider the possibility of developing nuclear fusion power?

A note on **Hexagonal Thinking**: Rather than the use of a traditional hierarchical outline, this essay was developed based on the use of Hexagonal Thinking. It involves the use of hexagons placed to represent a web of connected ideas. Whether the connections exist as presented is debatable, however, any likely debate is likely to be open and more than one-sided, and more likely to result in discussion than confrontation. Given these troubled times, I thought it might be worthy to present a way to encourage more open discussion. RMR

*Robin has presented *Writing Fiction with Other Writers*, one semester for six weeks, another for eight weeks.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Art & Imaging

by Nancy Severns



A spring semester class was offered by **Alan Perlman** on the topic *Artificial Intelligence: the Future of Art and Imaging*. Alan is a commercial photographer with an interest in the creative use of AI while expressing concerns about the misuse, deception and lack of proper credit to the originators.

- **Generative AI:** In the not-too-distant future, anyone will be able to generate photographs indistinguishable from those made by a camera using AI software. By typing out a description or describing it to a digital assistant, we'll conjure up lifelike images. Researchers are already using powerful computers to create entirely fake images from scratch, blurring the line between reality and imagination. (1)
- **Visualizing Change:** Generative AI-aided art serves as a powerful tool to visualize societal shifts. Artists like Refik Anadol use AI to broaden our perceptions, challenge norms, and inspire us. Whether exploring identity, climate change, or the human condition, AI-generated art pushes the boundaries of what's possible. (2)
- **Ethical Considerations:** As AI becomes integral to the art world, we must grapple with ethical questions. How do we attribute authorship when algorithms contribute significantly? How do we ensure diversity and avoid perpetuating biases embedded in training data? These discussions are essential as we navigate this transformative landscape. (3)

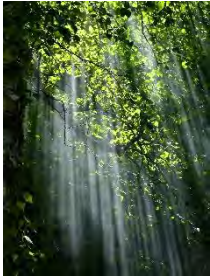
Did you suspect that I used Artificial Intelligence to create the above content in the three bullets? I did, using Microsoft's Copilot and the command "write a 100 word essay on artificial intelligence: the future of art and imaging". I did not edit the response I received online. References were included on the article generation unlike what occurs with image generation.

The VCLLI course was a mix of demonstrations and discussion exploring options for creating imagery and the impact of such technology on common assumptions regarding imagination and creativity as the exclusive domain of sentient human beings.

After describing the confluence of computing capabilities that led to the development of AI, along with two explanatory videos, Alan demonstrated multiple AI generative imaging tools. The importance of the commands used became obvious as did the differences between the images created by multiple online products. The final class session was devoted to the ethical issues surrounding generative AI images.

Class members were very engaged on the ethical and societal questions surrounding generative AI images. As a result of this class we became more aware of the source of images used and the process of generating a new image, allowing us to embrace certain aspects and become skeptical of others.

References cited by Copilot were: 1. The Future of AI Imaging | Artsy; 2. Pushing the frontiers of art and technology with generative AI; 3. If art is how we express our humanity, where does AI fit in?



Shining a light on All-Around Volunteer Rob Cohen

who says “Yes!” to VCLLI

Why Lifelong Learning? by Rob Cohen

Retirement provides us the luxury of many choices. Choices take many forms: indulgent, generative, sustainable, risky, safe... an endless array of properties. Choices that serve me best are usually multifaceted. My commitment to Lifelong Learning is indeed one such multifaceted choice.

In the past five years, my involvement and understanding of Vassar LLI has evolved. I'd like to share my experience and encourage you to ponder what LLI represents to you. My understanding and appreciation of Vassar LLI came in three phases...

Phase 1 - Helping a friend

I learned about Vassar LLI in 2018 from Jim O'Brien, a friend and fellow beekeeper who asked if I would help him prepare to teach a course about honey bees. At the time, I felt a general lack of understanding about bees and more generally our food systems in the US was resulting in consumer choices that harm both our environment and consumer health. I agreed to lend a hand and approached LLI thinking I was sharing my knowledge (about beekeeping). Much to my surprise I learned lots about public opinion and the choices that others make. You might say I learned more than I taught.

What started as one-and-done lending a hand to a friend was a choice that yielded unexpected dividends. A charitable choice morphed into a generative choice... nice!

I asked myself... Why did LLI surprise me? During my career I was focused on results and business objectives and I had set aside my general curiosity. I enjoyed taking the time to ask “Why” and I enjoyed being with others with the same curiosity.

Phase 2 - Presenting, Participating, & Making New Friends

I've gone on to present other topics for Vassar LLI, and have never lost the sense of wonder and surprise. When I share information about topics that I am curious about, I find value in the experience... feeling I've grown in my understanding from the experience of presenting.

The topics I've presented are all still important to me and I plan to refresh the presentations and offer them again. They include: beekeeping, food, shelter, pets, mead making, and energy. They are all rooted in nature and culture which are fascinating to me.

I've also thoroughly enjoyed participating in classes presented by others. It has always been my hope that all presenters value the experience as much as I do. I try to help presenters enjoy their experience in any way I can. **A great way to help presenters and to meet other participants is to volunteer to serve as class manager.**

Phase 3 - Helping others recognize and enjoy the things that LLI offers

Once I understood the many facets of my choice to participate in Vassar LLI, I realized the need to consider its sustainability as a program. The program is based on sound principles and well established in the Vassar College community, but it still, occasionally, faces challenges. COVID was one such challenge and I am in awe of how the Vassar LLI leadership team rose to face the challenge. I also saw firsthand how important the program became for many participants during COVID. At that point, I felt the need to 'help as needed' to insure the sustainability of the program.

We all contribute to LLI sustainability by paying our membership fees and volunteering when called upon. The past few years I found it particularly rewarding to ask about acute program needs and to help others address them. I am happy to provide LLI with the unexpected as a volunteer, because LLI has provided me with many unexpected pleasurable experiences. For example, I helped with program publicity after enrollments sagged during COVID. More recently I was asked to help members to rise to the challenge of Zoom class management. Both are still a work-in-progress, but, at least, each is being addressed.

Conclusion - What's the point?

Hmmm... no point, just sharing my experiences and perspective and thanking everyone that participates at Vassar Lifelong Learning for being a fun and supportive community.

Thank you all!!

I'm off to enjoy my summer adventures
on s/v Soave our Nonsuch sailboat.

See you in September...



THANK YOU

to all the generous volunteers

who said "Yes!" to being PRESENTERS

Judith Saunders ~ Dana Lucas ~ Linda Cantor ~ Sandy Corwin

Marge Groten ~ Muriel Horowitz ~ Julie Kessler ~ Mimi Tannen

Paul Ciminello ~ Alan Perlman ~ Rena Bonne ~ Miriam Cohen ~ Roberta Roy

Gary Quartararo ~ Tom Walker ~ Patti Horrigan ~ Sandra Opdycke

David Roberts ~ Carol DiPalo ~ Brian Mann ~ Chuck Mishaan ~ John McGiff

Mickey Steiman ~ John Platt ~ Denise Morett ~ Carolyn Keough

Jaime Ransome ~ Nathan Rosenblum ~ Marcy Heidish Dolan ~ Sarah Stevens

Alex Prizgintas ~ Alaina Richard ~ John Long ~ Colin Aitken ~ Kelli Duncan

Mary Ann Cunningham ~ Glenn Roy ~ Joseph Tanski ~ Mihai Grunfeld ~ Anita Kiewra

Jessica D. Brier ~ Mary-Kay Lombino ~ Vicky Weinblatt

Reception for Ralph Arlyck

Photos and article by **Jo Hausam**

Sybil Del Gaudio and other council members were instrumental in making arrangements to show Ralph Arlyck's documentary film, *I Like It Here*, at Vassar. Arlyck, a local resident and long-time documentary film maker, wrote, produced, and directed the film. A reception in his honor, in the Hospitality Room of Kenyon Hall, preceded the showing of the film.

Preparation



Delivering the food from Main Course Catering



Arranging the food



Menu



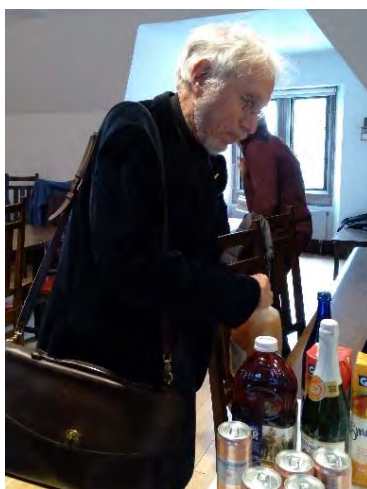
Setting out the drink



Reception



Ralph Arlyck and Sybil Del Gaudio



Elizabeth Arlyck and Mihai Grunfeld



Attendees enjoying the occasion.

Viewing the Film



A full house watched the film in Blodgett Auditorium. The event was open to VCLLL members, as well as to members of Marist’s Center of Lifetime Study and Bard’s Lifetime Learning Institute.

Sybil Del Gaudio, Professor Emerita of Film, introduced Arlyck. She considered the film to be a memoir, since much of it focuses on Arlyck’s life. He shows us, and meditatively reflects on, his neighbors, friends from the past, and family.



Photos on this page by **Diana Salsberg**



In addition to his personal story, in a broader sense, it is about aging and dying. In *Variety* magazine, Arlyck said: “I realized I wanted to make a film about what we all confront. It comes as a shock. You sort of realize that you’re getting older and you can’t do what you used to do. You’re gonna die...” Source: <https://variety.com/2023/film/global/i-like-it-here-ralph-arlyck-1235539529/>

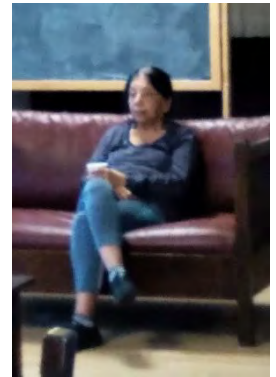
I was touched by the film, as I suspect most of the audience of seniors was too. Arlyck was telling a story that is familiar to us, using the vehicle of his own story. I thought it was a wistful look at aging; yet, the sadness was softened by balancing it with images of beauty and compassion.



Between Classes



Wimpfheimer Nursery School children on a walk



Upcoming Fall 2024 Semester Information

The Catalog of Fall 2024 course offerings will be available for viewing on July 31 on ProClass and on August 11 on the VCLLI website.

Zoom courses will be held on the following Tuesdays:

Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, Nov. 5, 12

On-Campus courses will be held on the following Fridays:

Sept. 20, 27, Oct. 4, 18, 25, Nov. 1, 8, 15.

(No classes on Oct. 11)

Note: Tuesday classes will start after our Friday classes.
There will be classes on Election Day.

Consider Volunteering

as a Class Manager or as a helper in the Hospitality Room.
If you would like to volunteer for any position, email lii@vassar.edu.



Photo by **Marian Pompa** taken at Stonecrop.

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