



December 1 - 9, 2025

Student Union Art Gallery



watch
a video
about the
project



Supported by GSG and SGA
UMassAmherst

K.F. Otis

honors thesis exhibition

Featuring

photographs & voices of

Harden **Ballantine**

Ken Bernstein

Lynda **Faye**

Alan Hurwitz

Alice **Leveston**

Sue Lowery

Lorna **Ritz**

Beth Mann

Sonia **Nieto**

Rich Prager

Ruth **Rinard**

Jane Taubman

"Ageism is a process of systematic stereotyping of and discrimination against people because they are old, just as racism and sexism accomplish this with skin color and gender."

—Dr. Robert N. Butler

Introduction

EXHIBIT: *ALL AGES* documents the productive lives of twelve older individuals and the indispensable social contributions they offer to society, particularly as it relates to younger generations. While the general public have become increasingly aware of age discrimination, positive perceptions surrounding age are continually thwarted by an ever-expanding digital landscape. Unfavorable portrayals of older individuals as frail and non-contributory are often reinforced by the mass media. In addition, the gap between generations has continued to widen by more than birth years; cultural, economic, and political polarization have led to the reinforcement of harmful generalizations that are often downplayed as “generational differences.” This exhibition not only demonstrates the rich and fulfilling lives of these older individuals, but offers observers of all ages an opportunity to engage in meaningful intergenerational connection.

ARTIST: K.F. Otis is an interdisciplinary artist whose creative practice is rooted in photography. Her solo works often address trauma, family dynamics, identity, and women’s rights. She began working on *ALL AGES* in 2023, during her first year at UMass as a community college transfer from California. She drew inspiration from the close relationship she had with her late grandfather, but also her experience as an older undergraduate. In practice, intergenerational experiences of the exhibition, and through it, fosters a healthier collective identity.

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ALL AGES





Hardy Ballantine

There are many ways to make the world better. There are many things that need to be done. The local nursery school could benefit from the presence of a grandfather type to come in once or twice a week for an hour or two and help the children with whatever they're busy with.

The village volunteer fire department needs able bodied citizens who will leap out of bed in the middle of the night to answer the call to come to the aid an elderly resident, living alone, startled by the chirping of a smoke detector. All it takes is some big, brawny firefighter outfitted in a bulky oversized yellow coat, a helmet fronted by a menacing face protector, a 40 pound oxygen tank strapped to his/her mighty back, to clump through the door wearing huge heavy black rubber boots that came up to

the thighs, and reaching way, way up to the ceiling and removing the dying battery from the offending smoke detector, thus restoring peace and tranquility to the night.

My wife and I bore and raised three children in a midwestern village. I found it a most agreeable and pleasant way to live a life. When the kids got to high school, I fancied myself as the impresario of the high school theater arts program. I ran the "front office". I was the stage parent from hell. Not only did I make sure my kids got lead roles in the plays, but also that all our friends and acquaintances, every single one, bought tickets AND attended the performances.

Now that I am well past my allotted years of three score and ten I carry on doing my little bit. I deliver Meals on Wheels, a program run by the town's Senior Center to bring in food to "shut-ins". It is important not to just provide nutritious meals, but give a human contact with people who live alone. I have a "Shtick." When I approach a recipient's door with the meal, I go into full Robin Williams mode, a la "Good Morning! Vietnam!" I open the door and bellow into the silence "Gooooood morning! It's LUNCH TIME!!" This draws a "Hah" or "get on in here."

All this might not mean much, but at my advanced years it's nice to know that I'm still able to do my little bit. If everyone did their little bit, maybe the world will be a little bit better.



Ken Bernstein

My name is Ken Bernetine, psychotherapist. I'm also known as Sensei Ken Bernstein of Moving Zen Karate.

One of the important things about Martial Arts is that it led me to develop the discipline, the structure, and the focus that I didn't have. Karate led me to begin teaching. I began teaching in Manhattan, NY, in 1975. I got a social work degree in the late or early 80s, I think, and then I knew I wanted more. A mentor suggested that if I wanted to be a therapist, which was my vision, I needed more training than that social program could provide — it wasn't so clinical in its orientation. So I heard him and I applied to an institute with a one-year feeder program, meaning you're exposed to doing this kind of work.

I hadn't done clinical work to that point. I liked it. I applied to the full-time program which was at a place called Post-graduate Center for Mental Health.

So I have these two skillsets. Having taught Karate many, many years and now I've been a therapist for about thirty five years. I love what I do.

There's a Japanese expression, "Nana Korobi Ya Oki," which means if you fall down seven times, you get up. And I have here a little ceramic doll called Daruma Daishi, and it's such a doll, as in every Japanese home, business, and, I think, schools, and it represents that indomitable spirit that we all need.







Lynda Faye

In the 1990s I opened The Purple Gables, a bed and breakfast in my home on East Pleasant Street. For several years I had guests from all over the world and felt this poem by Rumi expressed my philosophy as the host and to life in general.

The Guest House

by Jalaluddin Rumi

Translation by Coleman Barks

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*



Alan Hurwitz

This photo depicts one of several visions I had, for quite a while, of my retirement. And now, at least during our New England summers, I am manifesting that aspect of retirement vision.

I guess I need to mention, in case any friends see this photo and description, an admission that I had some practice manifesting this vision, in this same location, during my hectic organization development consulting career. Because of the extensive travel my work was requiring at the time I acquired my present home, about thirty years ago, I desired to do a lot of my weekend and some other recreational travel while staying very close to home. So I wanted to buy a house that worked for both up and down time.

This theory worked well for those years. And I guess it still does, though since “up-time” has diminished a lot, the strategy now has to cover much more of the year. So (maybe) it’s back to travel planning for swimming (or floating) for the rest in the future.

I want to add just a little more about my life in general, perhaps still related in some ways to the photo. Once upon a time, in a workshop some years ago, we participants were asked to offer a brief self-introduction, I thought hard, wanting very much to get this first workshop task right, and shared, “In many ways my life has been an ongoing tension between Winthrop Massachusetts (where I grew up - as much as I have by now) and Yale (where I went to college - I was a great test taker in those days), with Winthrop pulling ahead steadily as the years go by.” I can see, in my mind’s eye, any current friends who see this, nodding their heads in understanding, and those folks and others perhaps smiling (assuming they know at least a little about the town of Winthrop).

Fortunately Yale, and life after my college experience, gave me the opportunity to move actively into a much wider world, helping to strengthen organizations in many situations, cultures and countries, around the world and in many places here in the U.S. I was very grateful for those experiences, as well as for the opportunity to relax in between those adventures from the tiresome travel, and the challenging, and usually stressful work, relaxing much of the time precisely in the way depicted in this photo, shot lovingly by our honored, talented, curious, and very patient project creator.







Alice Leveston

My name is Alice Leveston. I am a master's degree social worker, with advanced credentials, now retired, who has worked in all settings of health care throughout my 45+ year career. During the last many years of my working life, I cared for patients who were seriously ill with a focus on palliative care and geriatrics, in a hospital setting. As my retirement approached, I realized that I wanted to focus mainly on myself and growing my interests and hobbies during my retirement. During my adult life, I had spent all my time caring for others—as a mother, a wife, a partner and a social worker—and now, I decided, retirement was time to focus on me!

I have always loved glass and functional art—as well as photography. In my twenties, I won first place, second place and an honorable mention for my portrait photography work of some of my older clients, in a photo contest sponsored by the then named Western Gerontological Society. This was a thrill for me!

That experience generated my wish to be included in this exhibit, celebrating older adults. Joining in on this project, seemed to be completing a full circle for me, only now I am the subject instead of the Photographer!

I have an aspiration to get creative with fused glass in my retirement. I have taken classes and have worked with a mentor. I have a long way to go, as this art involves not just creating interesting patterns, but also understanding how the kiln works and influences the design. This photo is of me trying my hand at figuring out a pleasing pattern before placing it in the kiln.

When I was approaching my retirement, some of the words in the song, “Granted” by Josh Groban, became guideposts for me... and they still are today:

*Maybe it's time you bet on yourself
Listen to your heart, just listen to your heart and nobody else
So go find out who you are, only you know who you are, who are you?
'Cause all you have to lose is your best life yet, so go ahead*

*If you have a dream go chase it
If you feel hope don't waste it
If you find love embrace it
Never take a single breath for granted
If you have a light go find it
The story's yours, go write it
Our days are counted on this planet
So I won't take a single breath
Take a single breath for granted*

The Man In The Glass

By Peter Dale Wimbrow Sr.

*When you get what you want in your struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.
For it isn't your father, or mother, or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
He's the fellow to please – never mind all the rest
For he's with you, clear to the end
And you've passed your most difficult, dangerous test
If the man in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass
But your final reward will be heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.*



Sue Lowery







Lorna Ritz

My Mother was an accomplished pianist from whom I acquired seriousness of purpose, (a work ethic). I studied under great painters in the 60's at Pratt Institute and then got an MFA Cranbrook Academy of Art. I developed a vision which became a visual language over decades that still unfolds. I remain in the prime of my search, now in my late 70's. I have always loved teaching, at RISD, Brown U., U MN., Dartmouth Coll. NY Studio School, Institute American U., Aix en Provence, France, Mount Gretna School Art, PA. I taught in Malta, Instituto de Belles Artes, Medellin, Colombia & Univ. Honduras in Tegucigalpa, Mt. Holyoke Coll & Western New England U.

I had my first solo show in NYC at Yve Yang Gallery where I am now represented exclusively. I paint every day in the most beautiful barn/studio a painter could have, which had once been a chicken farm. Architecture plays a huge part in the human psyche. My aura shoots way up to the rafters every time I enter the space, filled with new possibilities and search. I came to live in Amherst for one year but it has been 41. Nature plays a huge part in my research. The unheated barn solidifies the oil paint in the tube when it gets cold, so in mid- October -November, I will be drawing on-site at Mt. Pollux Conservation overlooking the Holyoke Mountain Range in South Amherst. I have drawn those mountains and that one tree in all my drawings since 1986. I study how the light changes on the mountains through that one tree hourly and seasonally. In late November I return to my smaller indoor studio to paint until I move my studio back out to the barn in early May. I am in the prime of my best work yet.

lornaritz.com



Beth Mann

As a mother and retired Health and Human Services professional, my identity now is closely related to caring for my two rescue dogs, Chester and Aimee. I have had champion bred dogs all of my adult life, but these two rescues take the proverbial cake! They are the best friends I could have. They're a huge part of my life and we are ever so happy with the unconditional playtime fun, long walks and cuddling!

When I was a kid, there was a popular song called
“Walking the Dog”

Written and recorded in 1963 by Rufus Thomas, at STAX records, in Memphis:

*“Walkin' the dog
Just a-walkin' the dog
If you don't know how to do it
I'll show you how to walk the dog
C'mon now, c'mon, c'mon”*

And yes, I WILL show you how to do it, because I'm a nut about properly training dogs too!





Reconocimiento a:
A ti nuestro humilde agradecimiento,
nunca olvidarte podremos,
porque has sido tu legado,
nos enseñando no en vano,
lo que quieres que aprendamos.
No importa que pase el tiempo,
importante es no olvidar,
el mensaje que sembraste,
todos queremos agradecerlo
o como mereces premiarlo.



Sonia Nieto

I am one of those one in eight who trace their heritage to Brooklyn. I was born in 1943 in Beth-El Hospital. I spent my formative years in several Brooklyn neighborhoods, an experience that indelibly stamped me as a Brooklynite. Though I have spent more than half my life in Massachusetts, leaving Brooklyn at the age of thirty-one to pursue a doctoral degree in education and vowing never to return, Brooklyn has left its mark on me. There's clearly something to the saying, "You can take the girl out of Brooklyn, but you can't take Brooklyn out of the girl." (Brooklyn Dreams, p.1)

My life has been defined by education. From the day in 1949 when I started first grade at PS 55 to the day I was awarded a doctoral degree from the University of Massachusetts in 1979 and beyond, I knew that education was the only way out of poverty and a life of unfulfilled hopes and dreams. My life has been a story of the redeeming social and emotional value of public education. Education has been my defining moment, my mission, my goal, and my Odyssey.

My nuclear family (my father, Federico Cortés; mother, Esther Mercado; older sister, Lydia; and younger brother, Freddy) are as critical to my story as I am. I am grateful to my parents for their tenacity in speaking and encouraging us to speak Spanish. Although my Brooklyn dreams have been more than realized, those of many other young [Puerto Rican young] people, from Brooklyn to Detroit, Orlando to Los Angeles, and everywhere in between, have not. I hope that this memoir will shed some light on how our society can make these young people's dreams come true as well" (Brooklyn Dreams, pp 7-8).

[An excerpt from the Introduction to my memoir, Brooklyn Dreams: My Life in Public Education (Harvard Education Press, 2016)].

I have been exceptionally fortunate in life: not only did I have wonderful parents who, although having a limited education, made sure we were cared for, loved, and supported in everything we did, including our aspirations for higher education. I met and married the man of my dreams at the age of 23 and we had a magnificent loving 55-year marriage until his death in December 2021. Our two daughters, Alicia and Marisa, and Jazmyne, the granddaughter we raised, as well as our other 11 grandchildren, and now 3 great-grandchildren, have been the joy of my life. And to top it all off, I had a remarkably fulfilling and consequential professional life as an educator. Now, in retirement, I remain active in some academic endeavors, I sing in a chorus for people over 75 years of age, and I remain an advocate and activist for social justice in education and beyond. In the end, my Brooklyn dreams have been realized more than I could ever have imagined.



Rich Prager

I was a language teacher and outdoor educator for over thirty years. Retired for ten years now, I've really enjoyed the freedom of not having a job. I've had more time for being outdoors — landscaping our yard and volunteering with Kestrel Land Trust, Conte Wildlife Refuge, and Belchertown's groups working to complete the bike trail from Northampton to Boston and to conserve energy.. The Pioneer Valley is a great place for hiking, biking and kayaking and now I can get away for camping trips more often than when I was working.

Teaching English to immigrants has been a pleasure, helping people get better jobs, go to college, become US citizens, etc. Working with a local hospice program has been a way to get to know people who are approaching death. As an older person, I have been able to learn and grow in ways I didn't anticipate. I have more time to spend with family, to play with my grandchildren, and to develop my meditation practice. Life can be full of adventure and possibility at all ages, deep and satisfying.







Ruth Rinard

ART— CRAFTING A VISION, SURRENDING TO MYSTERY

My grandfather's farm made me an artist. Golden wheat in the wind, expansive blue sky, billowing clouds, tasseled dark green corn, shimmering heat lightning, searing heat, small buildings on the distant horizon filled me with awe. A transcendent bright abyss opened before me.

Later to get an education and raise a family I moved east. Hills crowded in on each other, sky was hard to come by, roads disappeared around curves. Ever changing light filtered through forests. Humidity hung in the air. Everything came in quick glimpses. Everything demanded intimacy, inferiority.

Awe and intimacy, two constant threads in my work, link a deeply personal interior with the unfathomable beauty of the outer world. My art strives to make this connection visible to the viewer.

After careers in academe and the health sciences, Ruth became intrigued with the freshness of pure pigment and the tactile possibilities of pastel. When she realized she could combine her drawing skills within the painterly framework of pastel, she never looked back. Ruth has studied with Cindy Crimmin and Loriann Signori and exhibited with the Connecticut, New Hampshire, Cape Cod, Maine and Central Mass Pastel societies.



Jane Taubman

I am a lifelong dog lover. When we lost our previous dog to old age I thought, well, I'm too old to get a puppy because he might very well outlive me. But one of my children promised to take him if that happens, and I got a doggie whose name is Benny. Benny has been the best thing in my life, lately. He is a schnoodle, which means he is half schnauzer and half poodle, and he's absolutely adorable. He has really made my life great; he keeps me walking, laughing, and meeting new people because he's about the most friendly non-human being that I know.

And I'm so glad I did it.



Academics

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Businesses/Institutions/Organizations

Amherst Neighbors
Amherst Copy & Designworks
Bangs Community Center
Hadley Library
Student Union Art Gallery
UMass Amherst Department of Art
UMass College of HFA

Collaborators

Harden Ballantine
Ken Bernstein
Lynda Faye
Alan Hurwitz
Alice Leveston
Sue Lowery
Lorna Ritz
Beth Mann
Sonia Nieto
Rich Prager
Ruth Rinard
Jane Taubman

Thank You

