



Artist Statements

Engage

Please leave this book in the gallery.

About VSA Vermont:

VSA Vermont is a statewide nonprofit devoted to making the world of the arts accessible to Vermonters of all abilities.

About Engage:

Engage has importance to artists, audiences and venues across Vermont. It introduces accessibility features in museum and gallery settings to visitors and gallery staff. It offers professional development to artists.

Best of all, it brings people with and without disabilities together to the experience of art.

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Amanda Baggs

I started painting a few years ago when a friend told me that **my childhood art teachers were wrong to say I couldn't paint** just because I didn't do well with standard techniques.

I use acrylic paint on paper and paint with my fingers, going for the "feel" of how things move rather than the literal appearance. **I spend a lot of time on the backgrounds making many different layers** of color and shape.

My art represents how I perceive the world better than anything I have either made or written.

Belle Baker

Belle Baker grew up in Vermont **in an artistic family who also farmed** and loved the outdoors.

She blends her artistry and love of nature to create a line of **whimsical decorative items** that can be displayed in the home or garden.

A survivor of a traumatic brain injury, **Belle finds great personal satisfaction in bringing her beauty to the world and in growing a hobby she loves into a small business.**

Elaine Baldwin

I began going to GRACE in 1992 so I could do more with **my art** which **is changing as I get more experienced.**

I like drawing from pictures using Craypas to draw bicycles and typewriters and am beginning to use china markers.

Beth Barndt

I have been making collages since 1976.

Preparation for the final gluing can be complex and pretty precise.

These are some words I find applicable:

Balance, Grids, Pods, Repetition, Echo, Form, Space, Implication, Suggestion, Juxtaposition, Harmony, Resolution, Resonance, Surprise.

I like old wallpaper, the NY Times

Magazine section, wasps' nests, shiny papers, detritus.

And, since I cut things out a lot, the

leftovers often lead me right to playing with Negative Space.

Willow Bascom

I grew up in Saudi Arabia and Panama which exposed me to a variety of art styles, and over time I have incorporated global art forms and created a style I call “World Folk Art.”

Prior to lupus, I drew using colored pencils, but after the effects of lupus I couldn't press hard enough. **Since then, I draw the images with pen on paper, then scan them and color them** with Photoshop.

Recently I acquired a **graphic tablet** which **makes the process even easier.**

Joan Bernhard

In 1992 I began experimenting with **new techniques** to compensate for my lack of vision.

I went from watercolors to acrylics and incorporated tissue papers in the designs using more paste and paper and collage.

Because I was working in a group who were also trying to do the same thing, **we branched out to ceramics using a potter's wheel.**

Joel Bertelson

Joel Bertelson is a native Vermonter and lives in Colchester. **He started attending the GRACE workshop** at Howard Center in 1997.

He is an actor with the Awareness Theater Company and has developed his own plays.

In his art, he starts out with squares, adding shapes and circles. After trying out various materials he has settled on markers only.

Edward Burke

Since taking a camera on a high school trip to Mexico, **I started making artwork, and realized** that as a person with cognitive disabilities, **I sometimes see things that others do not.**

I look for hidden beauty and abstractness out in the streets and in nature. **I love the fall season, photographing spills and messes as they are, unstaged words, phrases and images** which I hope will inspire the viewer **to get back to nature by living simply.**

Ted Chafee

I started doing art seriously about twelve years ago. **I typically draw my picture and then use watercolors** over the drawing.

I read a great deal about nature and try to use subjects that **show nature at its best.**

Steve Chase

I started art **when I was six years old** and **my parents took me to museums** and **gave me a book on Matisse.**

I paint with large brush strokes in acrylics and pastels. **My work is colorful with a lot of texture.**

In both acrylic painting and oil pastels **my artwork has intense meaning** to my personal life.

Jean Cherouny

I started making art after struggling in school **when I was eight** and my mom got me into an art class.

My evolution from representative to abstract painter **has given me the ability to access an emotional landscape** with color. Art allows me to escape the carnage of life and manage several disabilities.

Painting is an active and truthful exploration from the inside and out.
I am always longing to paint.

Nicholas Clark

I began painting in Burlington High School and **at Jackson University where I was awarded most promising painter,** although not an art major.

I have come to pleine-air painting with its natural light and real effects.

Following a 1982 auto accident, **I had a year rehab stint, but have never lost the desire to create art,** preferably through painting, and will broaden to oils with acrylics res in the future.

This exhibition has really motivated me, and I am incredibly excited to produce.

Gwendolyn Evans

I discovered polymer clay in a body image workshop and **I continue to use clay and art for self-expression, self-healing and transformation.**

When I felt the urge to paint, I of course thought it would be impossible since I happen to be blind. However, a friend referred me to art lessons where **I learned to trust my intuition.**

I love discovering ways to combine different media **to create whimsical scenes and abstract patterns featuring brilliant colors and textures.**

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I tune in to the energy of the colors and
mediums. After many years resisting the title
I finally realize, I am indeed an artist!

Robert Gold

As a dentist, I re-purposed instruments to form sculptures out of rudimentary dental plaster and began to experiment with image transfer, **developing photos onto watercolor paper and manipulating images** with paints and pens.

In a 1996 car accident I sustained a traumatic brain injury. **Inspired by other Vermont artists** and with the support from the Vermont Arts Council, **I participated in printmaking workshops which inspired me to go large with my work and empowered me to strive to make a living** marketing my art.

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**The Vermont Studio Center awarded me
a month-long residency last fall.**

**Since my '96 car accident I have much
more limited ability but also experience
more beauty in the surroundings
around me.**

Jessica Greenwald

Jessica and her support person, Susan Croteau, **started painting together with the ARC group of Montpelier**, run by Jim Lund, around 2001. **Jessica wanted to** make some new friends and **explore her creative side.**

With Susan's support, **Jessica started painting with acrylics and** incorporated some **collage.**

Jessica and Susan use a hand over hand technique. They talk about what they want to create before they start.

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Susan puts the paint on the brush and positions the brush in her hand. **Jessica moves the brush** on canvas and **Susan helps guide her strokes.**

Jessica and Susan paint **abstracts**, landscapes, **self portraits**, still lifes and **sunsets**. Each painting **takes about 20 minutes to complete.**

Socializing with others is a big part of **Jessica's motivation.**

Betty Hampel

I met my husband, Harrison Hampel, a well-known artist who taught at UVM, while taking a night class. We married two years later and had a wonderful 32 years together.

He died in 2000 and it is really only painting that has held me together.

Seven years ago I developed generalized myasthenia gravis and cannot walk and am very weak.

I have my own method of painting, usually using ink line, and painting as best my hands will allow.

Jill Harvey

I have been going to GRACE since the early 1990's.

My favorite things to do are making art, knitting, latch hook weaving, and watching movies.

I use markers, pencil, and acrylic paint. **I look at a picture and begin from there.**

I live in Essex and go to activities at Howard Center. I have lived in Vermont all my life.

Margaret Lampe Kannenstine

I have used acrylic paints for years for environmental reasons. **I often sketch out of doors and paint later in my studio.**

I use linen board and paper as well as brushes and knives.

The collages which I have been exploring recently **are made of old works of mine on paper.** It is interesting to destroy something to create something.

My work is exhibited in galleries, museum collections, hospitals, academic institutions and corporations **in many states.**

Joshua Kobe

I use multiple layers of water colors and material and then use drip techniques to give the desired effect.

I was a Nuclear Medicine Technology major at UVM when I was injured during the second semester of my senior year. I started working with Vocational Rehabilitation in 2009 and eventually it was suggested that I try an art class.

I have been in love with art ever since and plan on this being my new career. It has given me a real focus and I look forward to art class every week.

Alexis Kyriak

Born in New York in 1950, **I didn't**
Begin serious study till 1976, entering
the **Fashion Institute of Technology**,
in a fine arts program that **gave me a**
solid grounding in classical study:
anatomy, perspective, design, drawing
and the techniques of oil painting.

Coming to Vermont in 1991, **I began to**
realize how deeply beauty mattered to
me and to pursue it without reservation
or hesitation.

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**Psychology, aesthetics, and the
phenomenon of painting itself,
metaphysics, and physics, are all guiding
me to the point of light I am going toward.**

Michael Leavitt

Michael started drawing at the age of two and has been drawn to the arts ever since.

Now, as an adult with autism, epilepsy and a metabolic disorder, **he has progressed to photography of nature, landscape, animals and wildlife.**

Karen J. Lloyd

I come to photography not from the technical aspect, but **from an artist and painters perspective** hoping to evoke awe at the sheer beauty of the natural world.

I feel most complete and whole **when I am snapping or editing photos, drawing, and painting.**

Although I have always loved art and creating artwork, **the process holds more meaning for me now than ever before** due to my illness.

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Karen J. Lloyd, **continued**

In July 2002 I contracted Lyme Disease along with two other tick-borne illnesses.

Struggling through the challenges **has made me more grateful for the gift of art.**

Nature is my main muse and the theme runs through almost all of my art, **regardless of medium.**

David Matthews

I started making art with my father when I was young, **looking at pictures** in public buildings and in books.

I focus on what I see.

First I draw in ballpoint. **Then I go back** into the picture **with colors.**

Robert McBride

I started studying painting in college and received a B.A. from UC Berkeley and an MFA from Hunter College in NYC.

From the start I have painted abstractly using bright colors. I feel that **my paintings** visually **capture a moment of energy** that constantly surrounds us.

I do not paint with specific image in mind and **viewers often tell me** about **narratives they see in my paintings.**

Brad Mckirryher III

I have always been artistic.

In art making **I use leather, steel, pen, wood and paint.**

For me, **art and creativity are** an inner **obsession.**

William G. Morgan

Before my traumatic brain injury in 2009

I had been a math teacher, computer systems analyst, and IT manager.

Afterward, **I was really in need** of something

I could feel positive about **and decided to try digital photography.**

I'm more appreciative of the natural

beauty around us than I ever was before

and I attempt to capture some of that using the variety of features and options available on today's digital cameras.

Lyna Lou Nordstrom

My first creations were “designer’ doll clothes and my own special wardrobe. **I learned batik** and created wall hangings and wearable art **which when worn became kinetic sculpture.**

The largest body of my work is one-of-a-kind monotypes which often go through the press many times. **Color is a prominent feature of my work.**

I have and continue to find **non-toxic materials** and processes for printmaking for my health and the health of the environment.

Dawn O'Connell

As a visual learner facing the challenges of dyslexia, **I have found my life and work come together in the arts.**

I have been a photographer for the past **12 years, also** working in **welding and fiber arts** to create multi-media projects.

Using photography as a tool of emotional expression **allows me to transform non-verbal communication into visual composition,** and I would like to inspire others to do the same through photographic expression.

Heidi Pfau

When I began to experience significant changes in my vision 15 years ago I mistakenly believed there were things I would no longer be able to do, including photography.

Digital cameras and **a shift in my perspective prompted me to play with photography** again, and I discovered what I really could see.

I take lots and lots of pictures and **I've learned to 'see' the ones I like** or that speak to me **with an intuitive sense.**

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Heidi Pfau, **continued**

Beauty for me **is beyond the literal. I love the creative process** and what it ignites in my spirit.

I have added audio descriptions and poems to each of the photos with the intent of **deconstructing what it means to see.**

John Pickett

I started making art when I was a young child. I liked to draw and paint musical instruments.

I like to read books about Greek Mythology and study the images to include in my work.

Sarah Robinson

Sarah Robinson's still life work brings forth embedded meaning in the objective world around us **in a process of design** she views as a dialectic of beholding, **in the tradition of Emerson.**

In photography she uses depth of field choices, film speed, lens choice and other compositional options to capture what she has beheld as a meaningful composition.

In recent years, undaunted by some new limits associated with Bipolar II illness, **she has returned to art as a part-time vocation.**

Jeanne Allyn Smith

Pencil is the first tool I had. I began to add color with oil pastel a few years ago.

Becoming an artist has been a transformative process. I am intensely visual/tactile/sensory person.

I have dyslexia and some synaesthesia and other sensory processing issues. **I find that art is a way to embody otherwise inexpressible states of emotion.**

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Jeanne Allyn Smith, **continued**

In addition, **daily practice** working my hand-eye co-ordination and exploring design and composition **helps to rewire and strengthen neural circuits** in my brain.

In making the invisible visible, **I found the tools to re-integrate myself**, and even benefit from my limitations.

Gidon Staff

I started drawing when I was eight years old **on a trip to Israel**. With a lot of free time on the ship, **I did a lot of profiles** of people and was told they were good.

For **the past 10 years I have focused on faces and abstract shapes**, and have been involved with Vision Quest art studio which has given me many opportunities to grow as an artist.

I work in pen and ink, colored pencil and charcoal.

Mark Utter

As a GRACE artist **Mark Utter works with paint and mixed media.**

At Champlain College he's worked for years with a dishwasher. **As a member of VSA Vermont's Awareness Theater Company** he works with a computer.

Using Facilitated Communication **Mark has created a screenplay about his life** with a communication disorder which he hopes to make into a movie this year.

Emma S.J. Walker

Juxtaposition and **adjacency** of colors **fascinates me** as do patterns such as fractals, snowflakes, etc.

I don't envision an end product before or **while drawing** a piece.

I'm agoraphobic and I like to decorate my environment since I spend so much time inside.

Filling a blank page is a problem I can solve in contrast to the myriad other troubles of the world about which I can do nothing, but I can make life look prettier.

VSA Vermont

receives **support** for **Engage** from

Bari and Peter Dreissigacker

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