



Left, Adrian Ghenie's "A Farewell to the Western World" (2007) will serve as the centerpiece for this season's exhibit at the Hall Art Foundation, featuring 70 artworks, from more than 40 internationally renowned artists. Right, Aleksandra Mir's "Newsroom Revival: Are You Kidding" (2020), a re-creation of a tabloid newspaper cover drawn in Sharpie, is part of an exhibit that will be featured in the Hall Art Foundation's upcoming season. Courtesy of Maryse Brand

Hall Art Foundation is opening with a goodbye as 'Farewell to the Western World' debuts

By Emma Stanton
Staff Writer

The Hall Art Foundation, happily situated on an old dairy farm, surrounded by 400 acres of pastures, sits in juxtaposition to the dark, political, and intriguing art displayed on its walls this year.

The art museum will reopen to the public on Saturday, May 9 for its 2026 season. The Standard spoke with Hall Art Foundation director Maryse Brand about the upcoming exhibit and the daring, provocative, and political art that will be featured. The centerpiece of this season, Brand explained, will be "A Farewell to the Western World." Borrowing its title from a painting by the acclaimed Romanian artist Adrian Ghenie, "A Farewell to the Western World" gathers a variety of paintings, drawings, sculptures and photography that depict imagery suggestive of global shifts and an irreverence towards systems of established order.

"[This collection] is a multi-generational group show that includes approximately 70 artworks by over 40 international artists, including works by Rineke Dijkstra, Adrian Ghenie, Leon Golub, Philip Guston, Aleksandra Mir, Malcolm Morley, Gerhard Richter, Andy Warhol and Ai Weiwei, among others," Brand explained.

"The show is installed between three of our buildings... While each artwork depicts a scene specific to a person, place,



In the large-scale photographic installation "The Nazis," Piotr Uklański underscores a sustained and collective fascination with the Third Reich as depicted through the lens of Hollywood and production companies across Europe and South America. Courtesy of Maryse Brand

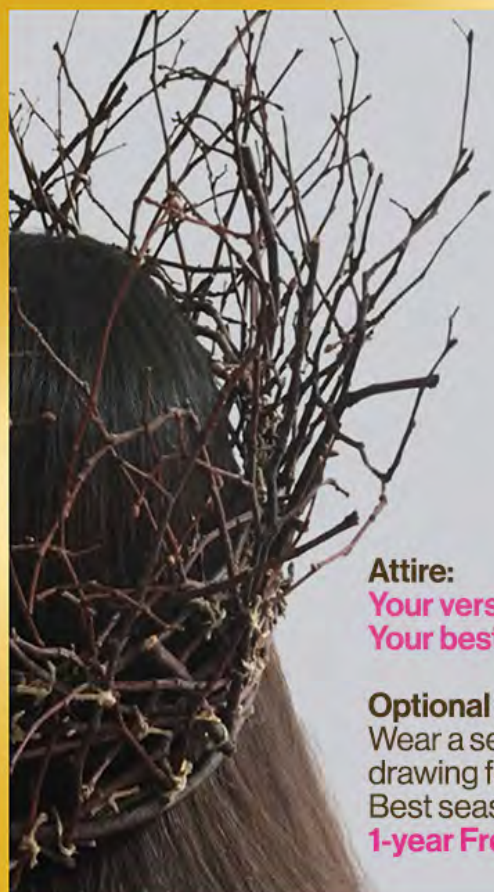
and period, they collectively trace patterns of conflict, power, and sociopolitical upheaval that have concerned artists globally [for] generations. The show aims to remind audiences about the evolution and consequences of certain periods in our history, and questions whether and how they may be repeating themselves today — both here and abroad," Brand told the Standard. Ghenie's painting, Brand said, for which the exhibit is named,

depicts a white-clothed figure enclosed in a bunker, perched atop a miniaturized version of the New York City skyline alongside Greco-Roman sculptures. Embodying the amalgamation of culture and technological innovation, Ghenie's ominous painting utilizes dark grays and somber blues to allude to the despair that plagued a post-Soviet Romania — where the benefits of Western influence, in particular the promises of its governing and financial structures, were questioned by the artist and many others.

Among the other 70 artworks, visitors will have the chance to experience Ai Weiwei's provocative piece, "Study of Perspective (White House) (1994-1999)." In a photograph taken during the Clinton Administration, Weiwei positions his middle finger in front of the White House. Taken from a far vantage point, Weiwei illustrates the diminished scale of the presidential building from across the great lawn and insinuates a tone of political defiance. This photograph is part of a famous Weiwei series, where the artist positions his middle finger in front of a number of powerful political buildings all around the world, from the Basilica San Marco in Venice, to the Reichstag in Berlin, to the Red Square in Moscow, Brand added.

Two other notable artists featured in the exhibit are Aleksandra Mir and Philip Guston. Mir recreates the cover of a tabloid

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Bird songs

There is a bird that lives in the trees outside our living room window. I don't know what kind of bird it is, but it has a beautiful and distinctive song. I smile every time I hear its morning recital. Somewhere, deep within my memory, I've heard the song before.

Some sixty years ago, I remember waking up to an identical song as a child in northern Vermont.

It was at our camp near Morrisville.

My parents and siblings would still be in bed, waking up slowly, safely, and gently in the forest. We would soon move across the country, and while there were plenty of birds in California, they were different birds, with different songs, with different memories attached, none so peaceful and fulfilling as the birdsongs outside my Vermont window, today or long ago.

My wife, Angela, returned from Oregon a couple of weeks ago, after going to bury her father, the last of her adoptive family. As you may have read here, she had never known her birth parents, and now, with her adoptive parents gone, she was feeling more than a little lost. I felt very bad for her, but as is usually the case when I try to understand her inner feelings, I had, as they say, nothing. I prayed for her and held her hand and left it in God's hands, who, as usual, understood everything I did not.

Just after arriving home to Grafton, Vermont, our daughter Cassie called. It seems that her research on the internet had come up with a paternal ancestor of Angela's. A blood relative. Her fifth-great-grandfather was an officer in the Revolutionary War by the name of Captain Joseph Whitcomb. Whitcomb, the same surname listed on Angela's birth certificate that she had stumbled upon as a teenager. The name of the birth father she had never known. Cassie's voice shook with excitement as she told us this news. And then, something else.

Captain Whitcomb, it seems, was one of the original sixty land-grant owners and founding fathers of a brand new town in New England — Thomlinson... soon to be renamed Grafton, Vermont. Cassie sent a photograph of the gravestones she found online, that of the captain and of his wife, Elizabeth. Gravestones at Middletown Cemetery, four miles from our front door.



Paul Wein
Columnist-at-Large

Something truly amazing was taking place right before my eyes. Something changed in Angela as she absorbed what she was hearing. The same girl who had shyly dismissed her past with a quiet "I was adopted" for the last fifty-plus years seemed to glow and grow taller, straighter, stronger. It was all beginning to make sense: why she had always been drawn to New England,

Grafton in particular, why she loved studying the history of this place, the forts, the sugaring, the nature, the weather, the seasons. Vermont was in her blood.

She would often, when being introduced to others in our congregation, point out that, while she was adopted and had never known her

birth-parents, I was a native Vermonter. And now, with a phone call, my puny nativity was eclipsed by her very own heritage, the first she had ever known. She had ancestors who, two hundred and fifty years ago, were drawn to the exact same place she was. And while we ourselves have lived from coast to coast in these United States, we both knew the minute we saw Grafton that this is where we were supposed to be, the last place we would ever move to.

A nice person from the Grafton Historical Society answered our emailed query and offered to research Angela's family: where they lived, what they were known for, and what they may have been like. I imagine they were a lot like us. They would have to be.

We visited their gravesite last week. We had brought a grave-stone cleaning kit from Amazon with us, not knowing what condition a 225-year-old stone would look like. It turns out, they were in amazingly good condition. One would have to suppose that some group has taken care of the graves over the centuries, and we thank them from the bottom of our hearts. There is a marker identifying the captain as a Revolutionary War veteran, also in great condition. We thank other, unknown souls for that, as well.

I stood back a ways as Angela cleaned the headstones of the captain and Elizabeth. There was a third headstone between them, a tiny unmarked stone, that of a child. We would later learn that this was the stone of their two-year-old daughter, Abi-



The gravestones of Captain Joseph Whitcomb and Elizabeth Whitcomb in Grafton's Middletown Cemetery.

AJ Wein Photo

gail Whitcomb. Somehow, perhaps due to the blood relation, or maybe Angela's mother's intuition, which we men know is one of the most powerful forces on Earth, Angela carefully cleaned the smaller stone, as gently and lovingly as I have ever seen her touch anything, including our baby daughter's face.

As we walked back to the car, I heard the bird song again from the trees overhead. I thought about how possible it was that this bird was the descendant of birds that the captain and Elizabeth woke up to the sound of, so many years ago. Maybe one that baby Abigail heard one beautiful morning of her short time on earth, here in Grafton, Vermont, before lying down to sleep with her parents for a while, in a place they called home.

"Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming in which all those

in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life..."

— John 5:29

Building more than bones

For more than a year after losing my husband, I retreated to the recliner in front of the television, passing the days watching PBS. Then, one day, during one of her weekly visits, Reading's Aging in Place town nurse Rita Rice, gently coaxed me out of isolation by suggesting I attend a local session of Bone Builders.

I wasn't sure exactly what Bone Builders was, but I decided it was time to get out of my chair and try it. The first class began with a full-body warmup: head, neck, eyes, face, shoulders, hands and wrists, arms, and even the toes. We walked in place for 100 steps. "Water break!" My introductory class was three years ago, and I've been attending twice a week ever since.

Bone Builders was a turning point for me. Not only am I stronger, but my balance and outlook have improved. And, maybe best of all, I've found a circle of positive, health-conscious new friends. For me, the social benefits have been as valuable as the fitness I've achieved. I've stayed out of my recliner and ventured even further back out into the world. I've even joined a Gentle Yoga class.

Bone Builders was developed based on research conducted at Tufts University and the theory that strength training twice a week dramatically reduces the risk of fractures and can reverse the effects of osteoporosis. The free classes are taught by volunteer trainers at donated sites.

The program, which includes stretching, breathwork, balance exercises, and weightlifting, follows a specific routine:

Warm-up: A five-minute warm up to get the blood flowing.

Balance Progression: We practice standing on toes and heels without wobbling. When I first started, I had to hang on for support. Now I've even mastered the "tandem walk" — one foot in front of the other, heel to toe. Try closing your eyes but be sure to hold onto something!

Resistance Training: We use ankle weights for the lower body and dumbbells for the biceps, triceps and posture. These exercises make everyday life easier, from climbing stairs to lifting heavy groceries. And I'm standing and sitting straighter.

Cool Down: You don't want to skip these slow, seated stretches for the neck, shoulders, arms, chest, and hamstrings.

The Thompson offers Bone Builders led by certified instructor Althea Derstine.

Paula Audsley, the center's business office manager, joined the program five years ago. She said she believes it helped with her recovery when she fractured her back in a fall two years ago.

"After I healed, my doctor ordered another bone density scan to make sure that I did not have osteoporosis," she said. "The good news was that the bone density had increased 1% from my previous scan."

Paula was so impressed with her results that she trained to become an instructor to ensure the program at the Thompson continues to thrive.

The class meets every Tuesday and Thursday at 3 p.m. at the senior center. For more information, call 802-457-3277.

Eleanor Grice is a longtime member of The Thompson and now its writing club and previously served on the Advisory Board. For questions, comments, or ideas for the Thompson column, email writersclub@thompsonscenter.org.



Eleanor Grice



Talk of
The Thompson

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newspaper in a large-scale, Sharpie drawing. After previously exploring themes of weather, police activity, and celebrity culture, Mir has revived the series with headlines about Donald Trump. The series, entitled "Newsroom Revival: Are You Kidding," explores Trump's unique ability to manipulate mainstream media attention, evoking a tradition utilized across various authoritarian regimes throughout history, according to Brand.

The Hall Art Foundation will also feature the painting "Courtyard" by Canadian-American artist Guston. Painted in 1969, this work centers on two of Guston's iconic hooded figures facing off under a clock in a space defined only by a brick wall. "Paired down to its simplest elements, Guston's narratives have been heralded for centering around concerns of the Civil Rights Movement," Brand said.

In addition to this multi-building, cross-generational artist exhibition, attendees can also experience Christian Marclay's "Made To Be Destroyed." This 21-minute video work compiles scenes from movies — drama, comedy, action, romance, horror, and documentary — in which both real and fictional artworks are smeared, broken, torn, toppled, burned, or otherwise damaged. "The title 'Made To Be Destroyed' references the process of film production and the making of objects for cinematic use — replicas of famous works of art that are created only to be destroyed on set. Strategically [interwoven] by Marclay under a cacophony of sounds, the actions are either intrinsic to the process of creation, or haphazard and intentionally violent, or both. The video work is simultaneously funny, violent, exciting, and unpredictable," Brand said.

The final exhibition will feature the work of Piotr Uklanski. In an installation entitled "The Nazis," comprised of 164 cropped images of actors performing in German SS clothing in film productions made between 1933 and 1998, the collection will highlight the fascination and allure this specific regime had on Western Culture and the entertainment industry. "The actors' individual performances span genres from historical dramas to comedies, classic films to cult exploitation, and long-form cinema to television episodes," Brand said. "Often saturated and glossy, Uklanski's densely arranged series is a poignant appraisal of the film industry and its commodification of a fascist regime.

"Like the works in our related group show, 'A Farewell to the Western World,' [Uklanski's] presentation aims to remind audiences about a period in our history, especially one which has been commodified through the lens of Hollywood," Brand said.

In addition to the three exhibits — "A Farewell to the Western World," "Made To Be Destroyed," and "The Nazis" — that will be hung in the various barns on the property, the Hall Art

Foundation will also unveil three new sculptures on its grounds by Robert Indiana, Carl Andre, and Aaron Curry.

On a concluding note, Brand told the Standard, "We reopen for the season on Saturday, May 9, and will be open on weekends through Nov. 29. All guests are welcome to come and continue to enjoy dining at our

cafe where we have partnered with the Brownsville Butcher & Pantry to provide refreshments, including sandwiches, salads, baked goods, snacks, bottled beverages, wine and coffee," Brand concluded. "We cannot wait for the grounds of the Hall Art Foundation to be filled with those who love and appreciate art as much as we do."

Tickets and more information can be found at hallartfoundation.org.

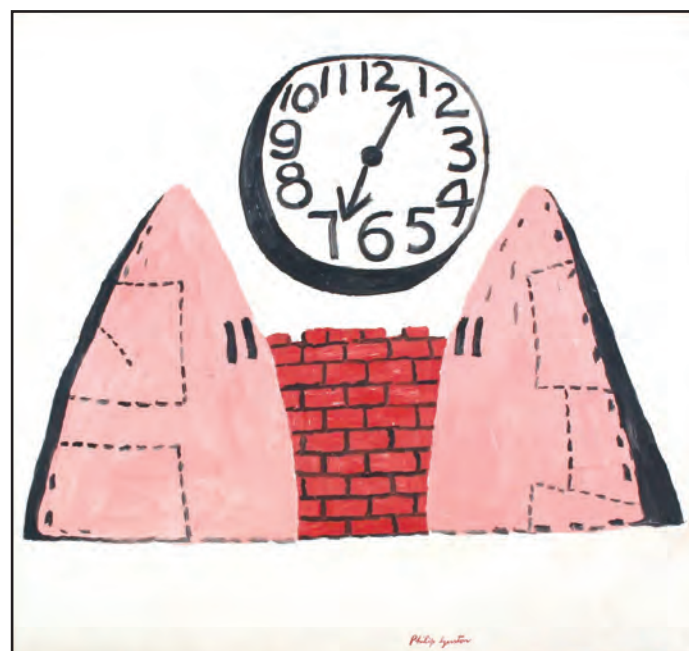
IF YOU GO

"A Farewell to the Western World"

Hall Art Foundation, Reading

May 9 through Nov. 29

Tickets and more information at hallartfoundation.org



Philip Guston's "Courtyard" (1969) is reminiscent of Guston's other political pieces, suggesting that to combat inequality, its perpetrators must be clearly identified. This work will hang alongside that of Ai Weiwei, Adrian Ghenie, and Aleksandra Mir in the Hall Art Foundation's upcoming exhibition.

Courtesy of Maryse Brand



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