

A NEW ERA FOR THE MILLS

By Barbara Goodson

Jessica Hough, the new director of the Mills College Art Museum, is known for her outstanding interpretive vision in creating exhibitions of contemporary American and international art. She brings particular expertise in working with emerging and mid-career artists to develop innovative projects and successful exhibitions of their work.

“Ms. Hough is an excellent addition to the Mills community. She likes to show work that is challenging, that questions the meaning and purpose of art, and that pushes edgy ideas,” says Mary-Ann Milford, provost and dean of the faculty (and formerly dean of fine arts). “She is also aware that balance is needed in a museum setting and enjoys doing shows that are approachable to students, children, and the wider community.”

Hough received her undergraduate degree in art history from Occidental College in Los Angeles and her master’s in curatorial studies from Bard College in New York’s Hudson Valley. For nine and a half years, she was a staff member at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut, starting as an intern and working her way up to the position of curatorial director. During that time, she was part of the team responsible for rebuilding the Aldrich Museum—experience that will serve her well as she plays a leading role in planning for the future of the Mills College Art Museum. We interviewed Hough at the start of the fall semester.

WHAT LED YOU TO A CAREER IN ART?

I have had a pretty straight trajectory, unlike most people. I grew up going to museums in Philadelphia. I had two full years of art history in high school; a wonderful teacher took us on field trips to New York—to galleries and to the Museum of Modern Art—so I had this amazing, rich art experience as a kid. In college, despite my mother’s begging me to do something practical, I ended up majoring in art history.

HOW DID THAT EVOLVE INTO CURATING?

I wrote my undergraduate thesis on Manuel Ocampo, an artist who was living in Los Angeles at the time. I got to spend time with him in his studio, at his home, and at the gallery where his work was shown. It was a great experience. After graduating I curated exhibitions at Occidental; my first show was reviewed in *Art Week*, which was very exciting and very encouraging.

Then I applied and was admitted to the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. This was a new idea: a two-year degree to train people who wanted to become contemporary curators.

WHAT DREW YOU TO MILLS COLLEGE?

Mills offers a wonderful opportunity to direct a museum that’s heading in a really interesting direction and to build on a great foundation. And I loved the idea of being part of a small liberal arts college community. This year, I’m enjoying life on campus, in Faculty Village, with my husband and four-year-old daughter.

HOW DOES THE MUSEUM ENRICH ARTS EDUCATION AT MILLS?

The museum plays a very important role for MFA students and for undergraduate art majors and art history majors. It’s crucial to students who are studying studio art or art history to understand the way art institutions work. I’ll be teaching the museum studies course and hopefully acting as a mentor—providing guidance and making connections for students.

But I also believe the museum experience is part of education across the board. Understanding the visual art world is part of being a rigorous thinker and exercising your imagination. By visiting exhibitions, students learn visual literacy. So the museum is important for every student on campus.

Dana Davis

COLLEGE ART MUSEUM

The first show curated by Jessica Hough at the Mills College Art Museum, *Don't Let the Boys Win*, closing December 9, features three internationally recognized women artists. Lara Schnitger created *Private Dancer* (right) for this exhibition of work with a playful and empowered female perspective.

The museum's spring semester show, *We Interrupt Your Program*, will include video and new media works by 14 women.

For more information, see page 6 or go to www.mills.edu/campus_life/art_museum.



Bruce Cook

WHAT'S THE MOST DISTINCTIVE ASPECT OF OUR PROGRAM?

There aren't too many colleges of this size that actually have a bona fide museum with a collection on campus. Students have an incredible opportunity to have a hands-on experience at the museum, such as talking to the director or with artists or being able to handle an object in our collection. I think when students leave here, they'll find that's hard to replicate.

HOW DOES MILLS' COMMITMENT TO WOMEN'S EDUCATION INFLUENCE YOUR ACTIVITIES AT THE MUSEUM?

I've decided to focus primarily on showing female artists over the next year. Most major museums show more artwork by men than by women, so I feel there are many reasons to focus on women—not just for Mills, but for the community as a whole.

But there are broader questions that I'm thinking about, too. How does the fact that Mills is dedicated to educating women impact what we collect? Are there other ways that we can serve students and serve female artists? These are really important questions for me to address.

"The museum experience is part of education across the board. Understanding the visual art world is part of being a rigorous thinker and exercising your imagination."

WHAT DO YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT DIRECTING AN ART MUSEUM?

I love the issues that come with running an institution. I like thinking about marketing and attendance and traffic flow and issues around wall text and whether or not to do a brochure or a catalog and putting together combinations of exhibitions.

WHAT ARE YOUR SHORT- AND LONG-TERM GOALS FOR THE MUSEUM?

First, raising attendance and raising the public profile of the museum. Another goal is to steer the museum toward a potential renovation and expansion. This includes considering the future of the museum programmatically and how that affects what kind of physical facility we should have. There's already a lot of momentum and enthusiasm about that.

WHAT CAN THE MILLS COLLEGE ART MUSEUM BRING TO THE BAY AREA ART MIX?

The Bay Area is a very exciting place right now for visual arts—and especially contemporary art—with important institutions that operate in the broader international art community, such as the Berkeley Art Museum, the Wattis Institute, SFMOMA, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. I'm beginning to see how Mills can contribute something unique to the Bay Area, and how it has an opportunity to play an even larger role in the national and international art scene. Because of the museum's situation in a liberal arts college—and a women's college in particular—it's differently positioned than those other institutions. And so that context should inform what it does and how it moves ahead.

LIFE *in the* FAST LANE

By Moya Stone, MFA '03



Photo courtesy Tom Burnside

A BOLD STATEMENT near Denise McCluggage's senior photo in the 1947 yearbook proclaims, "We predict Denny to be the first woman President, Olympic ski champion, or the mother of ten children." Denny has not disappointed. A racecar driver, sports reporter, and columnist for *AutoWeek* magazine, in 2001 she also became the first journalist (and only the second woman) inductee into the Automotive Hall of Fame. Her remarkable life and accomplishments have set an extraordinary example of a woman who knows no roadblocks.

One of three girls, McCluggage grew up in Topeka, Kansas, with a lawyer father who encouraged his daughters in all their endeavors. "I was lucky. Dad's attitude was that we could do anything," she says. "I got my driver's license at 13."

Just three years later, McCluggage came to Mills. An avid skier, she founded the College ski club. "It was during the war, so we didn't get to travel much, and ski trips were few and far between," she recalls. Some of McCluggage's other extracurricular activities raised a few eyebrows among the school's administrators: "We used to play football on Toyon Meadow—that

was frowned upon—and I was called to task for organizing and advertising a jazz concert." The concert included Dave Brubeck, then a graduate student at Mills.

McCluggage participated in academic life with equal relish. Mills didn't offer a degree in journalism, the career she had already chosen for herself, so she forged her own way, undertaking a combined major of philosophy, economics, and politics. This broad education proved to be an advantage in her journalism career: "The main thing you need in life is curiosity," she says, "and Mills fed curiosity."

After graduating, McCluggage became one of the few women on the staff of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, pestering the editors until they finally hired her. "The editor in chief at the time said there should only be one woman reporter," she recalls. "They already had one, so they hid me." She worked as an associate editor of the Sunday magazine, covering music, books, and the arts, and she initiated a jazz column written by Ralph Gleason, which became widely syndicated.

McCluggage didn't know it at the time, but her life was about

to take a radical detour. At a local imported car dealership, she found something she just had to have: an MG-TC, the two-door British roadster that turned post-war America on to sports cars.

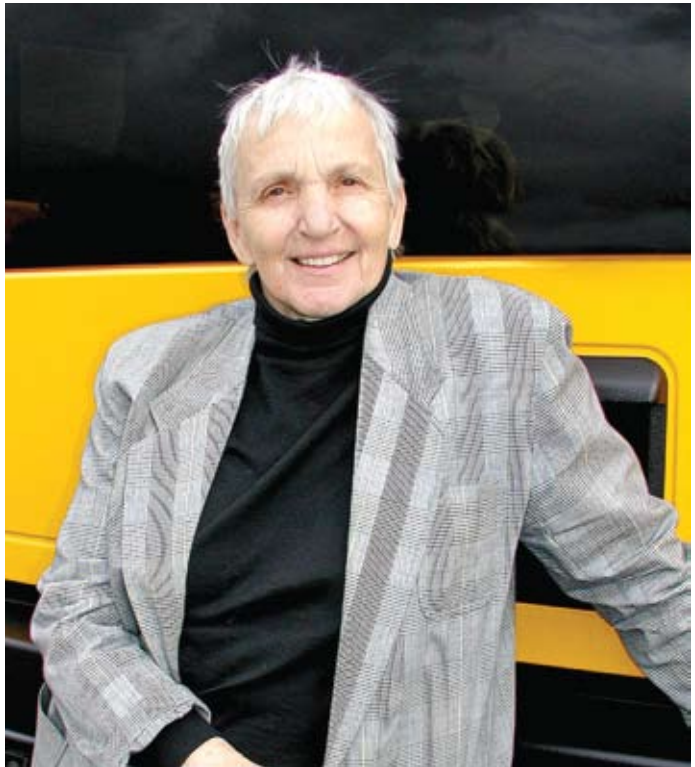
One sports car led to the next and it wasn't long before McCluggage was racing. "I liked driving fast, and I had a knack for driving on dirt tracks," she says. "Racing was simply a normal thing to do if you liked to control powerful forces at speed, whether on skis, in a sailboat, or in a car. It felt good." So good, in fact, that McCluggage went on to race in many of the great auto races and rallies of her day, such as Sebring, the Nurburgring, and Monte Carlo.

The world of racing was no more welcoming to women than journalism had been, but McCluggage's outgoing personality and varied interests led to friendships with great characters, from fellow racers like Stirling Moss, Phil Hill, Juan Manuel Fangio, and Carroll Shelby to an array of A-list celebrities such as Miles Davis and Steve McQueen.

In the early 1950s, she moved to New York and married actor Michael Conrad. But the expectations surrounding the traditional wifely role were an uncomfortable fit. She recounts one incident when Conrad—at 6'5" and with a booming, thunderous voice—forbade her from fixing their broken-down car, despite her ability, and insisted on calling in the local (male) mechanic. "I had hoped his obsession with what was properly masculine and what was properly feminine would be tempered with time," she wrote of her husband in her book, *By Brooks Too Broad for Leaping* (Fulcorte Press, 1994). "At first I enjoyed the challenge of playing chameleon and turning myself into whatever color necessary, but soon my energies were depleted beyond rejuvenation. And so it ended." They divorced after 11 months.

Her journalism career continued with the *New York Herald Tribune*, where she was assigned women's features. But after submitting an article about skiing, she was invited to move to the sports section—an unimaginable challenge to the status quo.

"To them I was a woman, not a reporter," says McCluggage. She was often kept out of the press box at sporting events



but wouldn't allow social norms to sidetrack her—she simply invented another route. McCluggage found her stories by roaming among sports attendees, listening in on conversations, and catching the athletes in hotel lobbies for interviews. She believes these unconventional methods were actually a bonus, allowing her to gather more interesting material.

Meanwhile, in 1956, the incoming sports editor at the *Tribune* pledged to remove McCluggage from the sports section and return her to the women's page.

"I don't go backwards," McCluggage told him. She quit the paper and took over the racing publication *Competition Press*, for which she had already been moonlighting as a writer. She ran *Competition Press* for a year before selling it (many sales later it became *AutoWeek*).

McCluggage has a unique vantage point to evaluate the challenges women face as they make their way in the world and to recognize the tools that ensure women's success. She strongly believes in the value of all-women's education at Mills. "Men dominate the external environment, and women need to have the world to themselves for a while."

Now 80 years old and one of Mills' Golden Girls, McCluggage is still on the move writing for *AutoWeek* and her local paper as well as attending new car introductions and other automotive events. She hasn't raced since the end of the 1960s, but her collection of trophies still resides in the kitchen of her Santa Fe, New Mexico, home. "I hope people will think I got them for cooking," she says, "and will be more receptive to what I feed them."



Ready, set, go! Denise McCluggage after the first heat of the 1956 "Ladies Race" in Nassau, the Bahamas (left). McCluggage today (top right) and with her signature polka-dot helmet (above).

Moya Stone, MFA '03, is a freelance writer who has worked for the Contra Costa Times, Orinda News, Daily Candy, and Glamour magazine.

Defending Violet

Jennifer Louise Jefferson '82
Five Star Publishing, 2006
www.gale.com/fivestar

Defending Violet is packaged as a crime thriller—its plot revolves around a murder and the main character's unhealthy obsession with developing a defense for the impending trial—but look deeper and you'll find a tenderly written tragedy set around the details of a murder mystery.

This case just “tumbled... into my life,” says Ginger Rae Reddy, the gritty, slightly disillusioned, and certainly cynical narrator who sets the stage in the first line of the novel. On the last day of winter, as Ginger Rae worries over her income, she answers the call that would take her “for a ride to places [she] did not want to go.” Violet Rosado was calling from jail. Ginger Rae had already won a restraining order against Violet's ex-boyfriend and father of her child. Now Violet had been arrested for abusing her 10-month-old infant, who lay in a coma. “I only take very minor criminal cases... the occasional misdemeanor... nothing that will deal the client more than 364 days in the county jail,” reflects Ginger Rae. “*Baby in the hospital* didn't sound minor.”

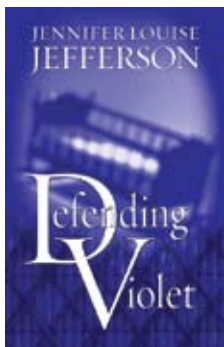
But Ginger Rae, a recovering alcoholic, hardly has the will to fight the storms coming her way, storms that could cause trouble to her health and to her relationships with those she loves. She takes Violet's case and tragedy unfolds as the mystery unveils and justice ensues.

In sharp descriptions of a gritty town trying to survive both post-industrial and post-gentrification depression, of Ginger Rae's modest office and home and the people who occupy them, of all Ginger Rae observes, the reader will find more than superficial attempts at increasing the page count. The author's fine descriptions of this world and the people in it expose not only what Ginger Rae sees and what she likes, but also reveal her own inner workings.

This is not purely genre fiction, though it adheres to the themes well enough to satisfy most crime novel junkies.

Jefferson's observations are poetic and insightful, giving enough weight to her story to carry the suspense and details of the criminal case as well as the humanity of her characters and the world through which they fight—win or lose—to make their way.

—Cleavon Smith, MFA '02



The Ultimate Golf Journal

Lisa Bach '90
Chronicle Books, 2007
www.chroniclebooks.com

Lisa Bach hits the sweet spot with *The Ultimate Golf Journal*. A golfer since age nine, Bach says that “most golfers play more than they practice, but all golf professionals are clear about the fact that it's essential to practice more than you play.” While the book includes plenty of room for playing, there is a strong focus on improving one's game through practice, with useful tools to achieve that end. Designed as a kind of golf training log meets golf instruction book, Bach's book will be accessible and interesting to players of all levels. The book includes logs for practice, games, lessons, and even expenses, as well as a place to attach score cards.

The Ultimate Golf Journal also provides plenty of helpful background and information: there is a section on golf etiquette, an extensive glossary of terms, a brief history of the game, tips for effective driving and putting routines, descriptions of 15 different golf games, and instructions on how to determine your handicap. While the book is immensely practical, it also includes fun features like a place to keep track of favorite “19th holes,” the term given to the bar at a golf course or country club.

Whether Bach's readers are aces, duffers, sandbaggers, scratches, or hacks, *The Ultimate Golf Journal* is an excellent tool to help improve their game. Bach says she's spent almost 30 years trying to hit a hole-in-one; perhaps, with this book, she has finally achieved that goal.

—Laura Joyce Davis, MFA '06

The Secret Language of Sleep: A Couple's Guide to the Thirty-Nine Positions

Evany Thomas '92 and Amelia Bauer
McSweeney's Irregulars, 2006
store.mcsweeneys.net



Evany Thomas and Amelia Bauer's *The Secret Language of Sleep* is an extended play on both couple self-help books and the myriad sexual position reference books that have become multi-million dollar niches for mass-market publishers.

The text categorizes couples into four types of sleepers: Sun, Wind, Sea, and Wood. These new-agey names frame introductions to each section that explain the similarities shared by members of each group: "The focus of any Wind pose is the way the couple's elements dovetail together." Thomas doesn't miss a beat in her use of the scientifically definitive tone used in serious research, and she also shows a keen ability to veer into the truly humorous, often within the same sentence: "The one unifying aspect of all Sun pose couples is that they always sleep facing the same side of the bed, their bodies aligned front to back, lined up like Girl Scouts eagerly waiting for a chance to donate blood or apply a cold compress to a burn victim." She has mastered the psych-pop speak of best-selling self-help books: "But as Fireman's Carry couples know, it can also take courage to agree to a third date after a lifetime running from commitment, or (in the case of Bird in Handers) to try again after long, loving relationships go sour."

Each of the 39 positions is accompanied by a full-page Amelia Bauer illustration, which provides much more than the graphics required for a tongue-in-cheek parody of sexual position books. Bauer's line drawings manage to portray the security and happiness of the couples practicing these sleeping positions. An added, and obviously intentional, element of the illustrations is Bauer's unwillingness to define coupledness solely in terms of heterosexuality. Gay and lesbian couples are represented in the same way as the other illustrations, making a visual argument that they are no different than other couples. It's subtle but very powerful.

Like other books in the McSweeney's catalogue, *The Secret Language of Sleep* is well-crafted textually, physically, and aesthetically; this is a beautiful, hard-bound book object. If you can't wait to find out more, Evany Thomas has a website where you can discover your own sleeping position: www.evany.com/sleeptest.

—David Harrison Horton, MFA '01

Further Reading

Reflecting the wide-ranging interests and expertise of Mills alumnae and faculty, the following books and DVDs have come to the attention of the *Quarterly's* editors in recent months. Although constraints of time and space do not allow full reviews of these offerings in this issue, we are pleased to share news of their publication with the Mills community.

Ethics of Emerging Technologies: Scientific Facts and Moral Challenges

Thomas F. Budinger and Miriam D. Budinger '59
Wiley, 2006

Motivating Moves for People with Parkinson's: Janet Hamburg's Seated Exercise Program (DVD)

Janet Hamburg, MFA '76
Parkinson's Foundation, 2004

Together Again: A Creative Guide to Successful Multigenerational Living

Sharon Graham Niederhaus '63 and John L. Graham
M. Evans & Co., 2007

Touring the Sierra Nevada

Cheryl Angelina Koehler, MFA '86
University of Nevada Press, 2007

Rituals of Memory in Contemporary Arab Women's Writing

Brinda Mehta, Professor of French and Francophone Studies, Mills College
Syracuse University Press, 2007

Eleanor

Carole Silva '54
Vantage Press, 2007

The Transformation

Juliana Spahr, Associate Professor of English, Mills College
Atelos, 2007

Homelands: Women's Journeys Across Race, Place, and Time

Patricia Justine Tumang, MFA '06, and
Jenesha de Rivera, MFA '07 (eds.)
Seal Press, 2006

World Voyagers

Amy P. Wood '90, Philip J. Shelton, and Stewart P. Wood
Book Orchard Press, 2007