

## SELECTED PAPERS

## The Art of Documents: The Digitization of Black Mountain College Ephemeral Materials as Exhibition and Interpretation Inspiration in an Art Museum Setting

Hilary Schroeder, Asheville Art Museum; Lydia See, Asheville Art Museum; Whitney Richardson, Asheville Art Museum; Corey Loftus, Asheville Art Museum

In 2017, the Asheville Art Museum received 408 documents from the family of Theodore Dreier Sr., a cofounder of Black Mountain College (BMC), an important experiment in education that occurred from 1933 to 1957 in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Consisting of course catalogs, community bulletins, event programs, letters, essays, and other printed matter personally collected by Dreier while at and following his departure from the college, the scope of these materials relates to individuals and events represented within and beyond the Museum's collection of artworks. In 2019, after years of registrarial limbo, the Museum began an intensive period of engagement with the documents, made possible by support from CLIR's Digitizing Hidden Collections grant. This process included reorganization of materials, cataloging and digitization, and critical investigation into the documents' presence within an art museum collection. Processing of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection (the "Dreier documents" or "the documents") has been undertaken by curatorial staff, graduate fellows, and interns and has generated compelling examples of how documents enhance exhibitions and object interpretation. This paper explores several projects from the past several years that serve as precedents for future pursuits. Engagement with the Dreier documents resulted in physical exhibitions, the development of digital exhibitions, and enduring web-based content. The documents foster greater interdisciplinarity within exhibitions and programming, bringing audiences into conversations that delve into diversity, design, intersections of media, and ideological impacts that extend the Black Mountain College legacy to the present. These explorations underscore the value of these materials to scholars and visitors and set in motion their continued use as interpretive tools in myriad settings physically and digitally.



**FIGURE 1:** Black Mountain College Logo & Statement, 1935, printed pamphlet, 9 × 5½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.001. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

The projects explored here include the following, each detailing the significance of this collection from numerous viewpoints. Lydia See, the fall 2020 curatorial fellow and current gallery director and the inaugural Joseph F. Gross Endowed Curator at University of Arizona School of Art in Tucson, grounded the exhibition *Connecting Legacies: A First Look at the Dreier Black Mountain College Archive* in her background in archives. She discovered, through the cataloging and organizing of the documents in advance of digitization, stories of relationships in the documents that echoed artworks in the Asheville Art Museum's collection. Corey Loftus, fall 2021 curatorial fellow and current PhD student at New York University, tracked trends in marketing materials and creative outputs by artists responsive to the appeal and allure of the college's physical location. Associate Curator Whitney Richardson's multiyear exhibition project *Modernist Design from Bauhaus to Black Mountain* had important details crystallize upon pertinent discoveries within the documents as they underwent digitization, leading to not only stronger interpretation but also the inclusion of ephemeral materials alongside related artworks and concepts. Each of these exhibitions resulted in physical

manifestations in the Museum's gallery as well as virtual engagements that felt particularly relevant in the years of 2020 and 2021.

### **Connecting Legacies: A First Look at the Dreier Black Mountain College Archive, organized by Lydia See**

Black Mountain College is an enigma. For every publication, exhibition, or lecture on the subject of Black Mountain College, there are a dozen stories unspoken. So many narratives echo the production of fabric by the human hand, wefts woven together onto the warp of place; every thread handwoven, every thread significant to the design. But when cloth becomes functional, a completed thing off the loom, we lose track of individual threads.

We see the yardage as a whole, for its prevailing use as a garment or dishrag or blanket, rather than the lifecycle of each thread which contributed to its woven structure.



**FIGURE 2:** Installation view of *Connecting Legacies*.

*Connecting Legacies: A First Look at the Dreier Black Mountain College Archive*, organized by Lydia See, fall 2020 curatorial fellow, intended to look more closely at the many individual, often unnoticed, threads of Black Mountain College through its primary source objects, and the digitization of the Dreier documents proved instrumental in this examination. By focusing the exhibition on several themes found within the Dreier documents and situating the ephemeral objects on view with objects from the Asheville Art Museum’s collection, we were able to offer viewers a holistic picture of what transpired outside of or adjacent to the most known narratives surrounding the college. These objects on view together create connections, each one a thread contributing to a nuanced tapestry of the people, materials, geographies, and ideas of Black Mountain College and its ongoing legacy.



FIGURE 3: Case detail from *Connecting Legacies*.

While scholars of Black Mountain College might have access to some of the materials contained in the Dreier documents by visiting archives or academic holdings of BMC ephemera at locations such as the Western Regional Archives in Asheville, North Carolina, many of these primary source objects do not exist in an accessible form outside of an archival finding aid or the rare digitized online collection, where access may be intimidating for those uninitiated in archival practice. This can be limiting to artistic or lay researchers who lack resources or context necessary to conduct research that is situated

outside of the dominant narratives about and from the college. An intention of *Connecting Legacies* was to situate this ephemera within the larger context of BMC, encouraging deeper inquiry into less accessible histories of the place (see figs. 2 and 3).

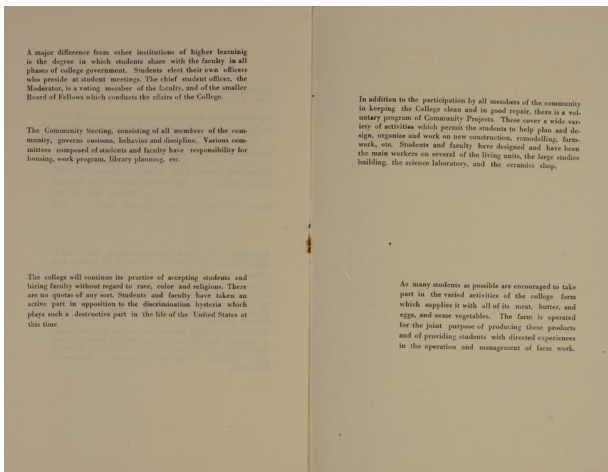


FIGURE 4: Page from Black Mountain College Bulletin Vol. 9, No. 3, 1951–1952, ink on paper, 9 × 6 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.361. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

Highlighted in *Connecting Legacies* are materials focused on underrepresented narratives and the women and people of color of Black Mountain College. For instance, in the Summer Music Institute of 1944, almost 10 years to the day before the *Brown vs. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling, Alma Stone Williams became the first African American student invited to BMC, as a visitor for the Summer Music Institute. Sylvesta Martin

became the first full-time student admitted the following year, and the following summer, musicians Roland Hayes and Carol Brice were welcomed to the college as its first African American faculty for the 1945 Summer Music Institute (though it would not be until the following year that the first full-time faculty of color were invited). Programs from their performances and college bulletins from the 1944 Institute sit curated alongside student artworks made around the same time in *Connecting Legacies*, as does the 1951–1952 Black Mountain College Bulletin Vol. 9, No. 3, opened to a page that reads (see fig. 4):

*The college will continue its practice of accepting students and hiring faculty without regard to race, color and religion. There are no quotas of any sort. Students and faculty have taken an active part in opposition to the discrimination hysteria which plays such a destructive part in the life of the United States at this time.*

In a section of the exhibition focused on relationships, artworks by artist couples like Josef and Anni Albers, who arrived at BMC together, and Ruth Asawa and Albert Lanier, who met as students at BMC, were hung in proximity to works and letters by lifelong friends Lorna Blaine Halper and Ray Johnson, whose friendship began and was solidified at the college. Arranged in a display case



**FIGURE 5:** Case detail of Black Mountain College course catalogs in *Connecting Legacies*.

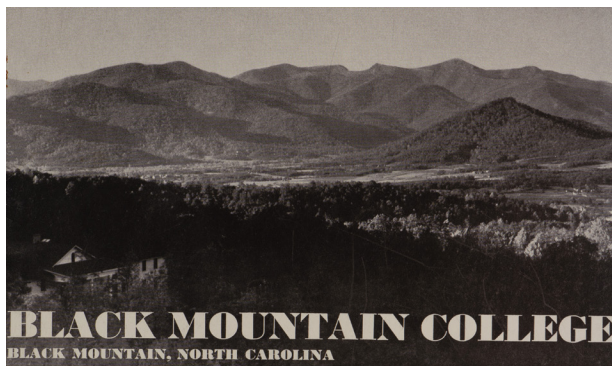
nearby were Dreier documents such as bulletins and recruitment materials from the eras during which these relationships flourished and affected the artists' aesthetic development—illuminating the conditions within which, for instance, Anni Albers began the weaving workshop wherein Asawa studied, or the development of architectural plans for the school that likely impacted Lanier's career.

While arranging the items from the Dreier collection for *Connecting Legacies*, there were many moments of delight in discovery. On one wall, below photographs of students and powerhouse women of BMC, a case held 10 college catalogs in chronological order, including the initial college catalog (see fig. 5), prior to adoption of the recognizable Albers-designed circular seal (see fig. 1). Now, thanks to the digitization efforts made possible by DHC, the content of each of these catalogs (and the delight of discovering said contents thanks to detailed transcription searchable online) may be enjoyed by all.

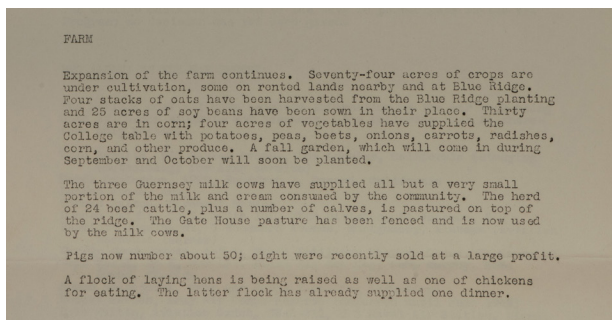
*Connecting Legacies* encouraged viewers to find connections between the type of artworks visitors are used to seeing in a museum setting with the more unusual items from the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection. The exhibition also invited the consideration of how the presence of primary sources impacts the experience of engaging with art, especially when placed in close proximity and with equal importance to one another. Through these connections and contextualized access made more democratic through digitalization, future research about the lesser-known legacies of Black Mountain College may be conducted with the same ease with which one may learn about the most notorious and well-known of its students, faculty, and visitors.

### Learning from the Landscape, organized by Corey Loftus

The digitization of the Dreier documents provided the materials and perspectives necessary for the formation of *Learning from the Landscape*, an exhibition organized by Corey Loftus, fall 2021 curatorial fellow, and focused on the relationship between the school and its environmental surroundings. While cataloging the broad variety of documents and detailing their contents for digitization, central themes arose that sparked previously unexplored conversations with the Black Mountain College Collection. One prevalent theme pertained to the various ways the BMC community interacted with the surrounding landscape, whether choosing it as an artistic subject, working on the farm, or hiking local trails. Many students, faculty, and visitors traveled far distances (often by train) to reach the remote campus situated in the heart of the Great Craggy Mountains in southern Appalachia (see fig. 6). The



**FIGURE 6:** Black Mountain College Photo Booklet, 1938–1939, ink on paper, 6 × 9 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.003. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Collection, Asheville Art Museum.



**FIGURE 7:** Black Mountain College Mid-Summer Report, 1942 (detail), ink on paper, 14 × 8½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.076a-f. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

sprawling rural landscape possessed a certain magnetic energy that made an impressive backdrop for the development and incubation of intellectual interchange, artistic freedom, and collaborative spirit. Landscape was also a common subject for painting and a plentiful source of natural materials for artmaking. As such, BMC's setting was crucial to the college's modern and progressive educational project. The art and ephemera presented in *Learning from the Landscape* spoke to the multidimensional role the environment played relative to the tradition of artmaking as well as the identity of BMC.

To give a few examples, the digitization of the Dreier documents led to the discovery of numerous facts and stories pertaining to everyday life at Black Mountain College. Some of the most interesting details related to the college farm, an aspect of BMC's history deserving of further study.<sup>1</sup> College bulletins sometimes detailed the food from the College farm that was served in the cafeteria. According to the Mid-Summer Report in 1942, following the college's move to its Lake Eden campus (see fig. 7), among the plants harvested from the farm (and some rented land at the college's first location across the valley at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly) were oats, soybeans, corn, and a myriad of

<sup>1</sup> For instance, David Silver's work on BMC's farm history has contributed to the history of the financial struggles the college was known to face, including the desperation that led the school to auction off their livestock in the mid-1950s before closing down. Silver introduced these findings in his presentation "Burying a cow and other desperate stories about food and the farm during the last gasps of Black Mountain College, 1954–56" at the 12th annual Reviewing Black Mountain College Conference, co-hosted by the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center and the University of North Carolina Asheville in November 2021.



**FIGURE 8:** Faith Murray Britton, Untitled, not dated, watercolor on newsprint, 18 × 12 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of the Black Mountain College Project and the children of Faith Murray Britton, 2012.26.018. © Estate of Faith Murray Britton.



**FIGURE 9:** Faith Murray Britton, *Matière Study*, circa 1941, magazine page and leaves on paper, 18 × 12 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of the Black Mountain College Project and the children of Faith Murray Britton, 2012.26.021. © Estate of Faith Murray Britton.

vegetables including “potatoes, peas, beets, onions, carrots, [and] radishes” (Mid-Summer Report 1942: 2). The farm also supplied the dining hall with animal products, dairy, and “chickens for eating” (Mid-Summer Report 1942: 2). The documentation of the farm, its contents, and care, could also be used in further research to track the subsequent phases of growth and decline of the farm. One of the great joys of putting together a checklist for *Learning from the Landscape* was the chance to highlight connections between these detailed discoveries such as the crops that supplemented dining hall meals and the visual work in the Asheville Art Museum’s impressive collection. The exhibition included both ephemera and visual sources so that visitors could seek further connections of their own.

Faith Murray Britton’s untitled watercolor (not dated, see fig. 8) was one such example of a student artwork that might constitute a link between the agricultural and artistic labor integral to the student experience. The vivid watercolor painting depicts a leafy green cabbage and brightly rendered fruit. One wonders if the illustration was painted from a still life composed from foodstuffs actually grown at BMC. In a different artwork also included in the exhibit, Britton’s work reflects the materials of her environment in a totally different manner; her *Matière Study* (circa 1941, see fig. 9) for Josef Albers’s class features pressed leaves. Working with found materials offered a low-cost and creative solution for students studying art and design at Black Mountain College who often looked to natural sources for inspiration. The artworks and the documents back up this ingenuity.

In addition to associations with dining hall grub and student artwork, the relationship between BMC and the regional landscape of Western North Carolina also concerns its identity as a modern institution and creative retreat. Panoramic views of the mountains were mainstays of the college’s promotional literature that helped shape the school’s identity and determine the tone of campus life. In his book on BMC, Fielding Dawson described the community’s “awareness” of the world as constant and all encompassing:

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*During meals and concerts in the Dining Hall the frogs around the lake brought the lake to our tables and chairs because we heard them. Herons and egrets, standing in the shallows near the Pot Shop, gave perspective to distance*

*by being in the foreground of the Blue Ridge skyline, but across the lake from us. In that world, we wrote or painted or composed, and were inside our work, unaware of anything but it, we merged or blended in and became space immersed in local, cosmic distance, as it must have been with the first peoples. Walking along the road, a hill, in a field at the farm, just crossing a road, we went through it, and in an intuitive sense, there were almost corridors (Dawson 1991: 138).*

The digitization of the Dreier documents and other materials in the ever-growing Black Mountain College Collection at the Asheville Art Museum will continue to fuel future research that broadens our understanding of life at Black Mountain College. Most importantly, these discoveries range from the moments we remember as famous highlights in BMC's history to lesser-known details that related to daily routines. Expanded use of the archives in this form will also bring new opportunities to form connections between textual and visual sources.

### **Modernist Design at Black Mountain College, organized by Whitney Richardson**

The planning of the exhibition *Modernist Design at Black Mountain College* began several years before the CLIR Digitizing Hidden Collections grant was awarded, but receiving the grant made an exceptional difference not only in the final presentation of the exhibition, e.g., objects included; it also meant that the research and labels produced for the exhibition were far stronger and brought new scholarship to the study of the arts at Black Mountain College.

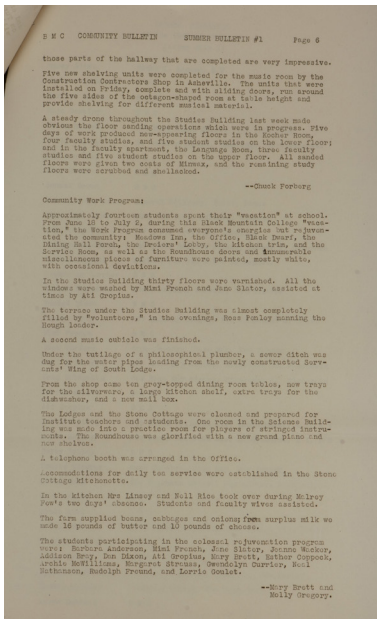


**FIGURE 10:** Mary "Molly" Gregory, Silverware trays, circa 1944, mahogany, pine, and reproduction contemporary linen,  $2\frac{3}{8} \times 32\frac{3}{8} \times 10\frac{1}{2}$  inches;  $2\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{8} \times 11\frac{1}{8}$  inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.12.13.01–02. © Estate of Mary "Molly" Gregory.

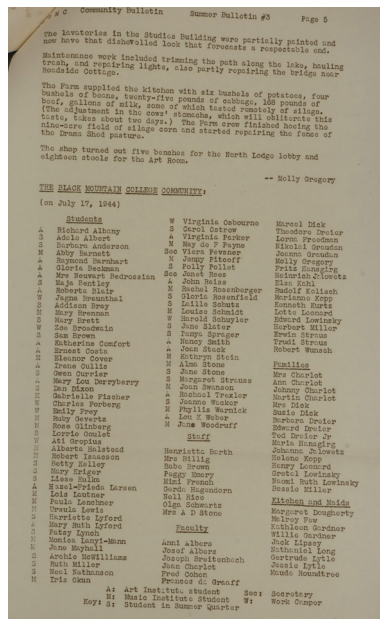
The premise of *Modernist Design at Black Mountain College* used objects in the Asheville Art Museum's collection to illustrate how the designs produced at Black Mountain College from 1933 to 1957 brought a Modernist aesthetic to the region around Asheville and the Blue Ridge Mountains. What made this effort possible was the 2017 gift from the Dreier family, which included furniture and craft objects from BMC in addition to the ephemera discussed above. While the furniture and craft objects were minimal (approximately 15 works) and straightforward to assess, the over 400 pieces of ephemera were more difficult to

comprehend and investigate. Theodore Dreier Sr., in addition to his role as a founder of Black Mountain College, acted as a fundraiser and sometimes mathematics and science professor until his departure in 1949. His role as treasurer—or perhaps his sentimentality—led him to collect and keep nearly every piece of ephemera produced by the college. The furniture was used by his family in their Martha's Vineyard home. The Museum's receipt of these objects was like possessing a treasure trove without having the proper time to explore.

The CLIR Digitizing Hidden Collections grant afforded a deep dive into these buried treasures, beginning with the ephemera becoming physically accessible for exploration. As curatorial fellow Lydia See pulled documents and organized them in archival boxes by type, Richardson was able to



**FIGURE 11:** Black Mountain College Community Bulletin College Year 11 Summer Bulletin 1 Monday, July 3, 1944, page 6, ink on paper, 14 x 8½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.159 A-E. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.



**FIGURE 12:** Black Mountain College Community Bulletin College Year 11 Summer Bulletin 3 Monday, July 17, 1944, page 5, ink on paper, 14 x 8½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.161 A-D. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.



**FIGURE 13:** Mary “Molly” Gregory, Stool, circa 1944, stained oak, 15½ x 18 x 15 inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.12.03.01. © Estate of Mary “Molly” Gregory.

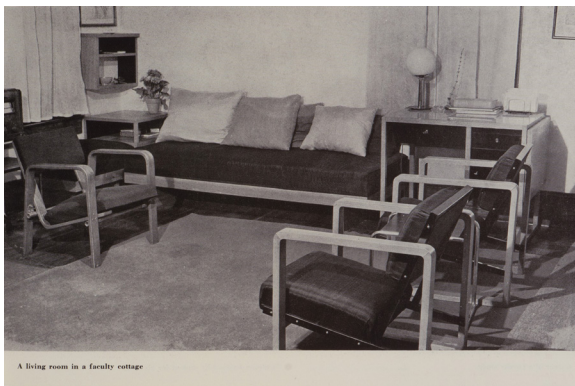


**FIGURE 14:** Lorrie Goulet, Untitled figure study, circa 1943–1944, oil on paper, 22½ x 15½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of the Black Mountain College Project and the Artist, 2012.26.54. © Estate of Lorrie Goulet.

look through the documents and access them with the exhibition in mind. As curatorial fellow Corey Loftus began to photograph and add documents to the database, one could fully see the scope of what the Asheville Art Museum had in its possession. Within these ephemeral documents were the creation dates of furniture and craft—a revelation! Before this, the Museum could only broadly date the works to woodworking instructor Mary “Molly” Gregory’s presence at Black Mountain College from 1941 to 1945. Now, the documents pinpoint the weekly meeting at which the artworks were announced as entering inventory, since they were used in everyday life. Some of those examples include the silverware trays (see fig. 10) in the Community Work Program section of Summer Bulletin #1 from July 3, 1944 (see fig. 11), coming from the shop of Molly Gregory. Another similar example came from the Community Bulletin announcement of the completion of 18 stools for the Art Room (see fig. 12). In Summer Bulletin #3 from 1944, just three weeks after the announcement of the silverware trays, the stools (see fig. 13) were presented at the recap of the Community Work Report. These stools became ubiquitous at the College and are seen in several photographs and artworks from the time (see fig. 14).

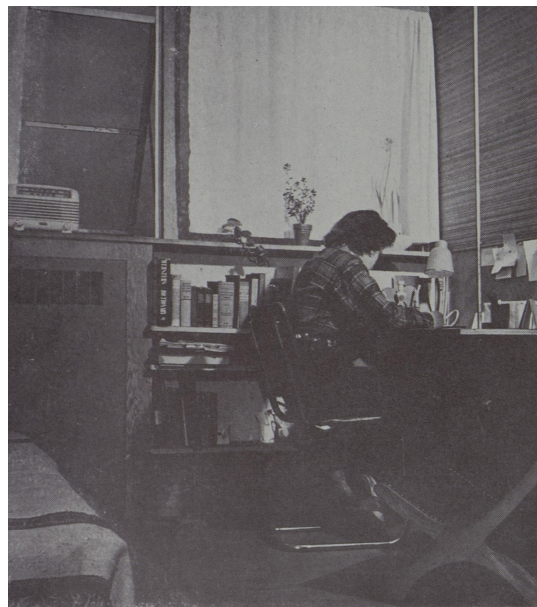


Other documents, like the Black Mountain College Photo Booklet, offered photographs of the built environment at the College, allowing the works in the Museum's collection to be seen in use and contribute to the scholarship on the degree to which the Bauhaus art school in Germany influenced style in Black Mountain, North Carolina. Notably, Josef Albers, head of the Art Department at Black Mountain College, and his wife, artist Anni Albers, were former students and instructors at the Bauhaus before coming to the United States in 1933. In a photograph from the interior of a Black Mountain College booklet (see fig. 15) meant to entice students to enroll, there is an image of Fritz and Anna Moellenhoff's living room. Though located at Black Mountain College's Greek revival-styled YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly campus in the 1930s, the space featured furniture designed at the Bauhaus in Germany in the 1920s. The Moellenhoffs immigrated to the United States in 1935 and were hired as faculty at the college at the recommendation of Josef Albers. While the influence of the Bauhaus arrived with the Alberses in 1933, including its methods of teaching architecture and design, the Moellenhoffs' presence—with their Bauhaus furniture—made that influence tangible. The wooden furniture pictured here was designed by Albers in 1926 for the Moellenhoffs' Berlin apartment. It was fabricated at the workshops of Trunk and Company—the furniture and design business of Anni Albers's father in Berlin.



**FIGURE 15:** Biltmore Press (attributed printer), Black Mountain College Photo Booklet, 1938–1939, ink on paper, 6 $\frac{1}{8}$  × 17 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches (open). Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.003. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

Another excellent example of the Dreier documents' contribution to this exhibition and scholarship is a photograph of a student in their studio (see fig. 16) sitting on a chrome and leather upholstered chair, Thonet side chair model B32, first designed by Marcel Breuer in 1927 at the Bauhaus. Its construction embraced industrial processes and the mass production of household goods. This chair has been in production for almost 100 years, thereby proving the enduring nature of the modern designs that came out of the Bauhaus. Also visible in the photograph, sitting to the student's right is a wooden chair designed by Josef Albers and fabricated by Molly Gregory (see fig. 17). With the discovery of this image, these



**FIGURE 16:** Wilfred Hamlin, Black Mountain College Bulletin Vol. 1, No. 3, 1943, ink on paper. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.40.004. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

two chairs were reunited and set the stage, so to speak, for *Modernist Design at Black Mountain College*. The contrast of chairs, one mass produced in a factory and one hand crafted on campus, illustrated the range of furniture design used at Black Mountain College. It also revealed the unmistakable and lasting influence of the Bauhaus, passed on at BMC to the students.

Proof of the precise creation date and daily presence of the furniture at Black Mountain College exists in these documents given by the Dreier family. They are visual evidence of how and where these materials were used, which could not have been achieved without increased accessibility of the Dreier documents. The CLIR Digitizing Hidden Collections grant that made this exhibition of art objects fully grounded in the reality of their creation and existence.



**FIGURE 17:** Mary “Molly” Gregory, Lazy-J chair, circa 1941–1945, designer: Josef Albers, birch, brass, and leather, 26 ¾ × 17 ½ × 24 ½ inches. Asheville Art Museum, Black Mountain College Collection, gift of Barbara Beate Dreier and Theodore Dreier Jr. on behalf of all generations of the Dreier family, 2017.12.03. Courtesy of the Theodore Dreier Sr. Document Collection, Asheville Art Museum.

### Histories Past Generating Histories Future

Through these three case studies’ unique approaches to the same material, possibilities for future continued research and sharing exists, as does a road map for similar materials outside the Dreier documents. Most recently, a set of letters from Mail art pioneer Ray Johnson, written while at Black Mountain College to departed classmate Lorna Blaine Halper, were organized into an insightful digital exhibition by Alex Landry, summer 2022 curatorial intern for museum diversity (see fig. 18).

These never-before-seen letters allow viewers to transport themselves into Johnson’s world at the time and, through the digital element of the presentation, quickly connect to works by other artists close to Johnson.

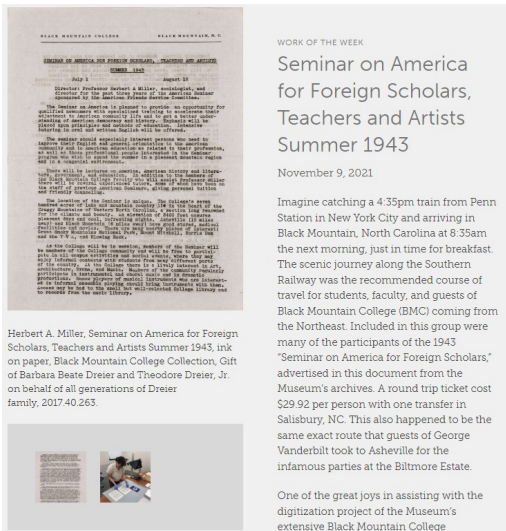
The efforts surrounding the Dreier documents reveal information that shifts standard curatorial trajectories. They provide contextual viewpoints while situating artworks historically in terms of broader trends and individual experiences. Relationships between people, places, ideas, and events are revealed, and specific dates can be applied to objects. In the paradigm of aesthetics at BMC, this ephemera captures broad reaching design choices and theoretical approaches inside and outside the classroom.

Unusual though not radical, the Dreier documents’ presentation alongside objects, both physically and digitally, represents a choice that acknowledges the

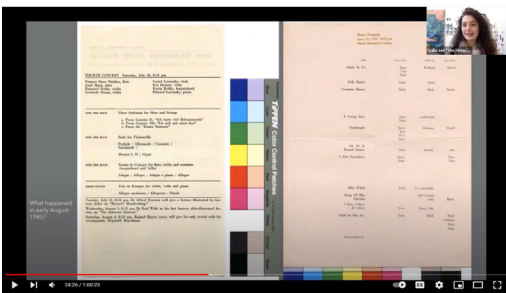


**FIGURE 18:** Screen capture of the 2022 digital exhibition *Dear Lorna, Love Ray*, featuring recently digitized letters from Ray Johnson.

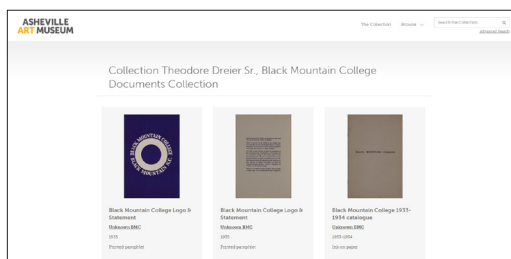
importance of ephemeral materials in viewers’ understanding of artworks and art historical concepts. Primary source didactic solutions function in a “show, don’t tell” manner that replaces or complements more traditional interpretive labels. Additionally, these materials, which would



**FIGURE 19:** Screen capture of a *Work of the Week* blog post written by Corey Loftus, sharing her research on the Seminar on America for Foreign Scholars, Teachers and Artists in the Black Mountain College Summer 1943 Bulletin.



**FIGURE 20:** Screen capture of Lydia See's virtual Conversation with a Curator, available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/FDhHd1lcOuk>.



**FIGURE 21:** Screen capture of the Dreier document landing page on the Asheville Art Museum's online database, accessible at [collections.ashevilleart.org](https://collections.ashevilleart.org).

normally remain relegated to an object file, are elevated in the fine art setting to a consideration of graphic design choices, a field of creativity that arguably goes acknowledged only in dedicated museums or exhibition.

Perhaps most exciting for the future of the materials digitized in this project are the virtual possibilities ahead of them. Already, these three exhibitions live on in the digital realm, though the physical presentations have ended. Visitors may explore blogposts that dive deeper into the documents as unique objects, ephemera in conversation with artworks, and the very process of bringing the documents to a larger public (see figs. 19 and 20). Curatorial staff, interns, and fellows have created video programming and virtual walkthroughs. The documents are now widely available and searchable with full transcripts, allowing scholarly and leisurely access to the materials without requiring further handling of these historic documents. Digital exhibitions and the Asheville Art Museum's publicly accessible online database (see fig. 21) in particular allow for repeated viewings of materials with ample time for deeper engagement that might not be possible in a faster paced gallery environment. Most importantly for our understanding of histories and visual culture, digitization of these materials has entered into a virtual space not limited or defined by the physical, allowing these new possibilities to exist alongside and in conjunction with traditional modes of presentation. In our current day and age, the physical and the digital feel equally as important and enduring, open for interpretation and experimentation in the same spirit as Black Mountain College itself. ●

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## Author Bios

**HILARY SCHROEDER** (she/her/hers) is the former assistant curator at the Asheville Art Museum in Asheville, North Carolina, where she focused on art of the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. She received her bachelor's degree in art history with a minor in German studies from Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2012 and her master's degree in art history from the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, in 2015. Her recent research and curatorial projects span Black Mountain College, contemporary Cherokee art, and fourth wave feminism. In addition to her work in the museum field, she is an avid reader of science fiction/fantasy and a dancer and aerialist.

**LYDIA SEE** (she/they/y'all) is a multidisciplinary practitioner, educator, and curator of art + archives who is passionate about the uses of art for social justice + civic engagement. Lydia is

- northern by birth, Appalachian by choice, and is currently relocating to the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (Tucson, Arizona);
- a serial collaborator, compulsive community builder, practicing studio artist, and educator of students from early childhood through end of life;
- a firm believer in the power of cultural access to transform lives;
- a curator within and without formal exhibition spaces.

In 2019, Lydia launched *Engaging Collections*, a residency and publication at the intersections of representation + art with libraries, archives, and special collections, with a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation as part of their All for NC Fellowship. Lydia was a co-founder of the Six Feet and Cabbage School communities and has had a hand in developing programming, infrastructure, and strategic plans for myriad other initiatives and organizations.

**COREY LOFTUS** is a PhD student at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. She studies modern and contemporary art of the Americas with geographic interests in Cuba and Mexico. Corey's work focuses on women artists engaging feminist, queer, and disability studies to question the constantly negotiated experience of being in a body. Prior to her graduate studies at the Institute, Corey received her MA in the History of Art at Tufts University and BA at the University of Pennsylvania. Previously, she worked as a curatorial fellow at the Asheville Art Museum and in various roles at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston and the Institute for Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania.

**WHITNEY RICHARDSON** is the former associate curator at the Asheville Art Museum, where she focused on decorative arts, design, and architecture. Most recently, she curated *Modernist Design at Black Mountain College* and was part of the team that curated *Intersections in American Art*, the Museum's major reinstallation and reinterpretation of the collection. Previously, she was at The Wolfsonian in Miami Beach as assistant curator and at the Art Institute of Chicago as assistant registrar of exhibitions and loans. Richardson received her BA in the History & Theory of Architecture from Columbia University in New York City. She holds her MPhil in the History of Design & Decorative Arts from Glasgow University in Scotland, specializing in the British Arts & Crafts Movement.