



A photo by Joel Sternfeld taken in McLean, Virginia in 1978. This is just one of several of Sternfeld's works soon to be on display at the Hall Art Foundation in Reading

Hall Collection, Maryse Brand Photos

# 'Sometimes you have to look beyond the traditional'

Hall Art Foundation opens for the season on May 10 with four new exhibits

By Emma Stanton  
Staff Writer

Happily situated on a former dairy farm in Reading, the Hall Art Foundation is reopening its doors for the season on May 10 to showcase four vibrant and exciting exhibits.

In trying to create a unique viewer experience, this curation features contemporary artists who explore the world in radically different ways. From whimsical watercolor portraits to rugged sculptures, the Hall Art Foundation has tried to find something for everyone.

Hall Art Director Maryse Brand told the Standard, "Visitors are welcome to explore the four new exhibits, each installed in their own separate buildings. Alongside the exhibitions, visitors can also explore our grounds and sculpture garden."

Brand hopes all who come make a day of their visit — see the shows, walk the grounds, and have lunch at the café with food provided by the Brownsville Butcher & Pantry.

Brand added, "The spring is especially beautiful here when the flowers on the apple trees in our orchard are in full bloom."

This May, the Hall Art Foundation will be displaying the paintings of Gladys Nilsson, a Chicago-born artist who rose to fame in the '60s and '70s. Nilsson is known for her densely layered and meticulously constructed watercolors and collages. According to Brand, "Much of her work feels filled to the brim with winding, playful imagery. Her watercolors and paintings are whimsical and fun, as she centers many of her portraits around the human figure — unwinding it, transforming it."

Also on display at the gallery this spring will be the work

of Joel Sternfeld. An artist and photographer whose work has been described by Brand as "beautiful, poignant, and at times political," Sternfeld's photographs center around landscapes, climate change, and the environment.

An even more political and, at times polarizing multi-media artist, David Wojnarowicz's work will also be featured this spring season. While at times difficult to take in, Lisa Kaija, Docent Supervisor for the Hall Art Foundation, calls his work "essential."

"David's artwork reflects an incredibly traumatic childhood with a very violent alcoholic father. He fought to figure out his identity for most of his life, until his untimely death at the age of 37. While battling AIDS, David also spent his life fighting a culture that deeply rejected him," Kaija said.

She went on to say, "His art is not aesthetically pleasing, but the motivations and messages embedded in his work are fascinating and deeply moving. Sometimes you have to look beyond what can traditionally be called 'beautiful' is true, that pierces you," Kaija told the Standard.

"That's one thing you can always expect from the Hall Art Foundation — some fairly provocative and exciting contemporary work."

The opening will also feature a group exhibit, "Pop Perspectives," presenting the paintings of three seminal figures in American Pop Art: Mel Ramos, James Rosenquist, and Ed Ruscha. "All born within a few years of each other and all first championed by the legendary dealer Leo Castelli, these

**IF YOU GO**

**Hall Art Foundation reopening**  
May 10 through Nov. 30

Open Saturdays and Sundays,  
11 a.m. to 3 p.m

Tickets can be found at  
hallartfoundation.org



Top: Gladys Nilsson's watercolor "Three Women," painted in 1965. Above: "The Monsoon Begins," painted in oil by James Rosenquist in 1984.

Hall Collection, Maryse Brand Photos

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**PENTANGLE**  
**ARTISTS**

**APRIL**  
**ON THE**  
**BIG SCREEN**

**Woodstock**  
**Town Hall Theatre**

**Black Bag (R)**  
7:00pm Friday, April 18  
7:00pm Saturday, April 19  
3:00pm Sunday, April 20

**The Penguin Lessons (PG-13)**  
7:00pm Friday, April 25  
7:00pm Saturday, April 26  
3:00pm Sunday, April 27

**Thursday, April 17 @2:15pm**  
**LIVE from Amsterdam:**  
Klaus Mäkelä conducts the  
Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra

# Pianist shares the music that 'saved her life' with our small town

By Emma Stanton  
Staff Writer

Last Sunday, Visha Nguyen performed a collection of Tchaikovsky's Piano Pieces at North Chapel.

The room was overflowing. Every seat was filled, and late latecomers gathered around the back of the sanctuary, eager to hear Nguyen play.

Before her performance, Nguyen addressed the crowd, speaking to the importance of this specific concerto and encouraging the audience to open their hearts to the rich musical landscape of Tchaikovsky.

"Tchaikovsky's 18 Pieces op. 72' is a beautiful score, where every piece bleeds into the next. Embedded in these notes are the composition of his creative life — his self-portrait, his sentiments, his doubts, his community," Nguyen said at the concert. "His piano pieces contain essential questions of life and death if you open yourself up to every crescendo and silence. The conversation is

right there in the work. In hearing these pieces, you will better understand yourself and your place in the world around you."

She played as if in active dialogue with the composer. Her fingers sweeping across the keys, sixteen pieces performed seamlessly from memory. A pause to collect herself, to blow her nose, and then back to Tchaikovsky. The room was immersed. Children sat quietly, watching Nguyen play. A few audience members wiped tears from their eyes. Everyone was transfixed.

As an encore, Nguyen returned to the sanctuary to perform a brief rendition of Bach's Orchestral Suite No. 3. Later, after the performance, she

**"I left a piece of myself in Russia, but America offers such great opportunities to teach and perform in unique places, like Woodstock. It's so wonderful to find myself in towns like this and be able to expose a different community to the music that in many ways saved my life."**

— Visha Nguyen

told the Standard, "I like to end each concert by returning home to Bach. In a way, it is what keeps me grounded in each new place I visit."

Home has become a foreign concept for Nguyen after moving to the U.S. from Moscow in 2022, at the height of the Ukraine War. "I left a piece of myself in Russia, but America offers

such great opportunities to teach and perform in unique places, like Woodstock. It's so wonderful to find myself in towns like this and be able to expose a different community to the music that, in many ways, saved my life."

She added, "I feel very small on stage, in strange and new places like this. I feel like a very small



Visha Nguyen performed a collection of Tchaikovsky Piano Pieces at the North Chapel Concert Series last Sunday.

Photo Provided

seed, but Tchaikovsky and Bach help to give me a voice, to grow and bloom through their music. It is a very special relationship for me. I'm just so honored to be here and share it with this town."

As a parting note, Nguyen said, "The best part of traveling to towns like this is getting to experience all the small eccentricities a place has to offer. I got to try authentic Vermont maple syrup for the first time, it was delicious!"

Nguyen's performance was part of a greater concert series hosted by the North Universalist Chapel Society, with the next guest performance scheduled to take place on May 18.

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artists developed distinct yet intersecting approaches to the visual language of postwar consumer culture," said Brand.

"I hope that when people arrive at the Hall Art Foundation, they come with a really open mind," Kaija concluded. "I hope they are prepared to experience the art and not form opin-

ions right away, but to live with it for a bit, go home, think about it, and then come back to experience it again. It is such a wonderful collection this year; there's truly something for everyone."

Whether you are interested in political pieces, postwar commentary, beautiful portraits,

or serene yet, at times, unsettling photographs, the Hall Art Foundation offers a collective artistic experience. Tickets and further information on this reopening can be found online at hallartfoundation.org

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