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BY SARA WIDNESS

HALL

ART FOUNDATION

MAKING VERMONT MORE ECLECTIC

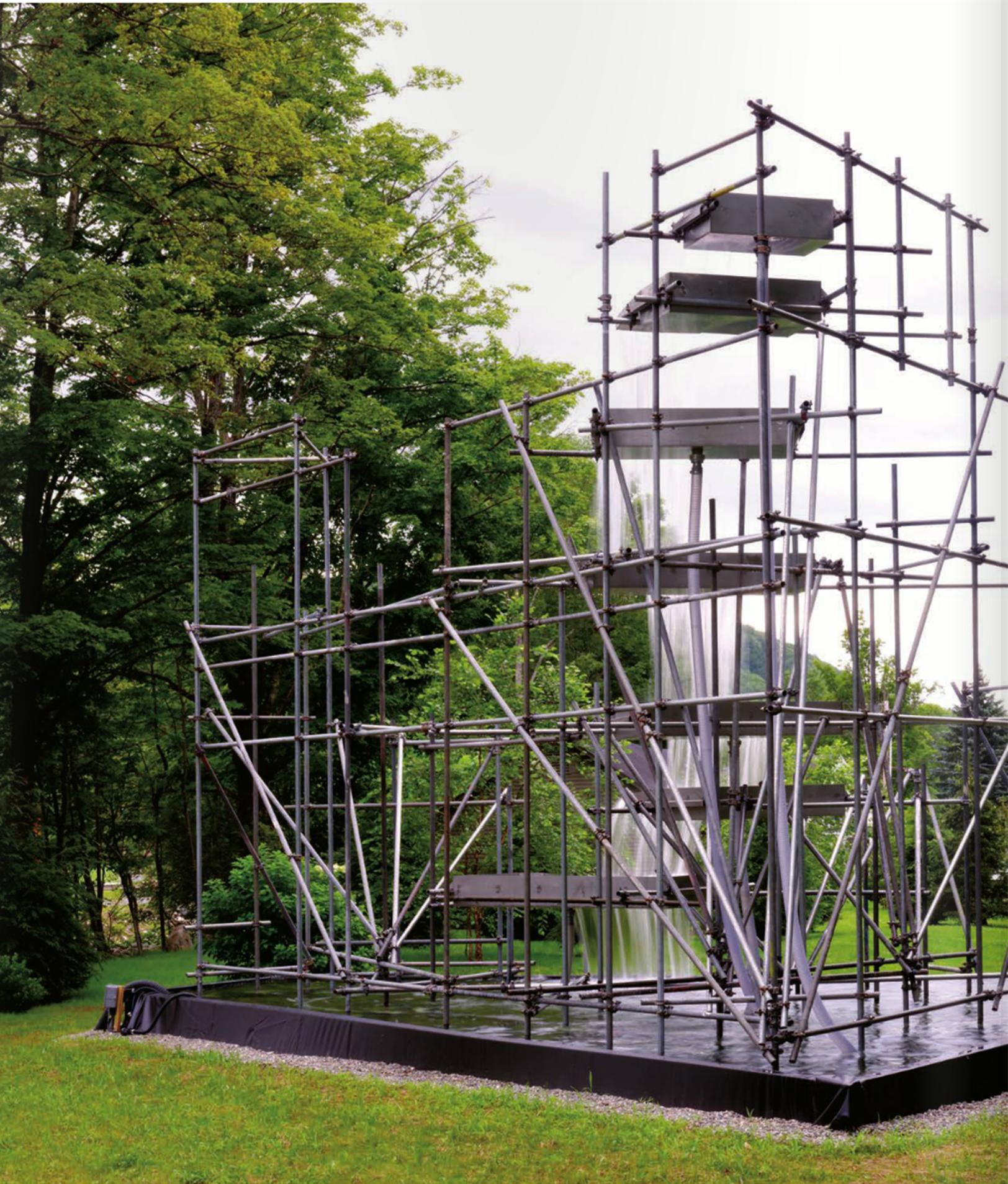
This is an old tale with a new twist. A couple tour Vermont, fall in love with the Green Mountains, contact a realtor, and the rest is history. The new twist? Thanks to the couple's resources and imaginations, Vermont becomes more eclectic in the space of just a few years.

In the village of Reading, a former dairy farm with 19th century barns and outbuildings fronts Route 106. Here the Hall Art Foundation exhibits selections from its own collection and that of Andrew and Christine Hall. Exactly when the couple's "Aha!" moment occurred remains a mystery, but when it happened, Reading was in the running to become a hub of world-class postwar and contemporary art. ▶▶▶



Top: Keith Sonnier, *Kiosk II*, 1987. Neon and aluminum, 118 x 79 x 79 inches. Hall Art Foundation. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation. © Keith Sonnier.

Left: Keith Sonnier, *Column I*, 1981. Neon, enamel, and aluminum, 79 x 32 x 16 inches. Hall Art Foundation. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation. © Keith Sonnier.



Left: Installation view of Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfall* (2004) at the Hall Art Foundation in Reading, Vermont. Photo by Jeffrey Nintzel, courtesy of Hall Art Foundation.

Below: Students from Reading Elementary School enjoy experiencing *Waterfall*.



SHOWCASING ART

In its list of “Must-See Museums Opened by Collectors Around the World,” *Architectural Digest* recently included the Hall Art Foundation, where art is now displayed. This is one of four locations where postwar and contemporary artworks from the Hall Collection are on view. Another location is at Andrew Hall’s alma mater, the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology at Oxford University in England. Here, the Hall Art Foundation, in partnership with the Ashmolean, presents a series of exhibitions of contemporary and postwar art in the museum’s central gallery on the lower floor.

In 2013, the Hall Art Foundation opened a repurposed, 10,000-square-foot building on the campus of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams to house a long-term installation of sculpture and



Richard Deacon, *Untitled 1991*,
1991. Painted welded steel, 63½
x 60 x 72 inches. Hall Collection.
Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation.
© Richard Deacon.

paintings by Anselm Kiefer. The former home of artist Georg Baselitz, Schloss Derneburg in Holle, Germany, will also open soon as a public exhibition space to showcase the collection.

Andrew and Christine Hall have collected art since the 1980s. In 2007, they founded the Hall Art Foundation, which now has an extensive loan program with institutions here and abroad. Andy Warhol, Julian Schnabel, Mel Bochner, Francesco Clemente, Philip Guston, and Damien Hirst are a few of the many artists represented in the collection's ever-expanding portfolio.

PUSHING BOUNDARIES IN ART

Since the exhibition space was established in Reading in 2012, art arrives here every spring as predictably as swallows return to the most famous mission in California. The art disappears when wild geese wing their way south come winter, but during the warm season, the indoors and the grounds welcome guests who, accustomed to crowds in urban art settings, are surprised by the peace and elbow room here.

The exhibitions are switched out annually. This season, *Keith Sonnier*:



Left: Peter Saul, *Ice Box 8*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 75 x 63 inches. Hall Collection. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation. © Peter Saul.

Below: Peter Saul, *Peter Saul vs. Pop Art*, 2012. Acrylic on canvas, 75 x 70 inches. Hall Collection. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation. © Peter Saul.



Early Neon encompasses a survey of this American artist's early neon works from 1968 to 1989. His use of nontraditional art materials in lieu of bronze and paint drew him into a counterculture that embraced his choice of fluorescent light, liquid plastic, latex, satin, bamboo, cheesecloth, string, wire, and foam rubber.

Three additional artists, Richard Deacon, Olafur Eliasson, and Marc Quinn, will have outdoor sculptures displayed. Richard, from Great Britain, transforms manufacturing and building materials (laminated wood, stainless steel, corrugated iron, polycarbonate, marble, clay, vinyl, foam, and leather) into anthropomorphic fantasies.

Danish-Icelandic Olafur Eliasson's *Waterfall* (2004) plays against the music

of an indigenous tributary's natural flow, both a visual and symphonic pas de deux compelled by man's creativity and by nature. The use of industrial materials, scaffolding, and plastic pumps evoke the site, sounds, and rhythms of a natural waterfall.

American artist Peter Saul is known for creating paintings that incorporate easily recognizable, often lowbrow imagery from popular culture in an exaggerated and provocative way. The exhibition brings together approximately 40 paintings and works on paper that span the artist's career from 1959 to 2012.

Also from Great Britain, Marc Quinn pushes the boundaries between art and science using ice, glass, metal, marble, and lead to create such objects as *The Incredible World of Desire* (*Phragmipedium*



Peter Saul, *Yankee Garbage*, 1966. Acrylic and felt tip pen on canvas, 71¾ x 69¼ inches. Hall Collection. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation. © Peter Saul.

Sedenii) (2003–2004), a 20-foot-tall rendering of an orchid in a way that reminds the artist “of an image stuck on the front of a child’s plastic toy.”

MUCH TO EXPLORE

Playing against the perspectives and fun of these artists are the grounds and buildings of the Hall Art Foundation. Take, for example, the romantic notions imbued by a hillside evocative of *The Sound of Music*. Guests strolling through Queen Anne’s lace and Indian paintbrush near the installations may be reminded once again how art can imitate nature.

The art also plays against the traditional exteriors of the exhibition

buildings, which include a sneaked ashlar stone farmhouse, a cow barn, a horse barn, and a tractor barn. Over the last three years, these structures have sheltered Olafur Eliasson, A.R. Penck, Georg Baselitz, Neil Jenney, and Edward Burtynsky.

The venues here are intimate, repurposed to accommodate art on a grand scale. The result juxtaposes rural Vermont 150 years ago with contemporary thinking in much the same way an octogenarian’s wit and humor spar with wrinkles. Themes have space to take root here, thanks to visions that have been curated to assure that resonances play long after visitors say farewell to Olafur



Students from Reading Elementary School in front of Olafur Eliasson's *Your uncertain shadow (growing)* (2010) at the Hall Art Foundation in Reading, Vermont, last year.

Eliasson's playground of water babbling alongside a tributary of the Black River.

Any presence other than low key would create disharmony around this community. Ostentation here sticks out like a sore thumb, but the presence of a youthful docent plucked for the season from a nearby classroom—especially one with art history under her belt—is comforting in this ambience of artists who may, until now, be unfamiliar. Three to four docents are hired each season. Some, like Susan Piccoli and Lisa Kaija, are teachers; all are at ease with the questions guests pose, and some have had the opportunity to meet the artists before the season begins.

Last year, a dance teacher from Hanover and a handful of her students created their own live sculptures, inspired to improvise in front of preselected artworks and moving from building to building. “The experience became something a little bit edgy and playful,” Marie Fourcaut says. “It was an amazing experience to have access to such beauty in the middle of nowhere,

in Reading, Vermont, and for us, the dance group, to be able to relate to the artwork.” A children’s ballet class interacted with Olafur Eliasson’s *Your uncertain shadow (growing)* (2010).

Student essayists from across the street at Reading Elementary School annotated their responses to the new worlds before their eyes. Michele Shepherd’s third graders were assigned a Neil Jenney painting to reflect upon; they wrote about what they saw. “This was complex for them; they really had to think hard to develop the narratives,” she says.

The exhibits are open from May 9 through November 29 by appointment. Tours are scheduled at 11am, 1pm, and 3pm Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays. Admission is free. 🌱

Hall Art Foundation

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