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From the Hill

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Still Life with Broun

Director of National Museum of American Art helps dedicate Lunder Wing

By Gerry Boyle '78

When Elizabeth Broun stepped to the lectern last fall to help dedicate the Lunder Wing of the Colby Museum of Art, she surveyed a hall filled with luminaries in the field of American art.

The assembled, Broun noted, had come from Santa Fe and Orlando, New York and Washington, Seattle and Los Angeles. When Broun, director of the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution, explained that she also had come a long way to the event, she was referring not to her flight from Washington but to her own personal history.

"I was raised in a very small town in southeastern Kansas—about ten thousand [people]," Broun said. "I didn't even know, nor had ever met, a collector of any type until I finally went to school."

But then she arrived at the University of Kansas at Lawrence, which she says has one of the nation's finest university art museums. Broun soon became acquainted with curators and faculty members. She watched as they assembled and used the museum's art works. From that springboard, Broun vaulted to a position of eminence, directing one of the country's finest museums of American art.

"I quickly found the path for my own life," she said. "So I am full of respect and awareness of the opportunity that a museum like this one [Colby's] creates for people. I feel se-

cure in saying that I would not be here at all, nor would I have a lifetime of enjoyment, but for the impact of my experience with a university art museum.

"Being in a place like this affords a student to acquire a new language. It is a language of art. Like music, it is a language that is non-verbal, but it is still totally capable of expressing every nuance of the human experience. It is a full and rich language with a vocabulary that is unique and one that, once you learn it and come to know other people who know it, it creates a lifetime of enjoyment."

Broun, who has said her own museum's mandate is "to encompass culture as well as art," cited six of her personal favorites from the Colby collection: "Portrait of Mrs. Metcalf Bowler" by John Singleton Copley; anonymous portrait of the Rev. Silas Hsley; "Still Life with Oranges" by William McClosky; "Shell and



President William R. Cotter, left, applauds at dedication of the Lunder Wing of the Colby Museum of Art. Shown with Cotter are Paula and Peter Lunder '56.

Feather" by Georgia O'Keeffe; "Barn, Brooksville, Maine" by Maurice Prendergast; and "Church at Head Tide, Maine" by Marsden Hartley.

Hugh Gourley, director of the Colby Museum of Art, later said Broun's lecture set the perfect tone for the dedication of the Lunder Wing. He praised

her selection of representative works from the collection, especially Broun's interpretation of "Still Life with Oranges," in which she compared the oranges to dancers on stage. "I don't think that anyone who heard her talk will ever look at the McClosky still life without remembering," Gourley said.

Broun, a close friend of museum benefactors Paula and Peter Lunder '56, first came to the Colby museum in May 1997 for the opening of the exhibit "White House Collection of American Crafts." She will return in August for the opening of a new exhibit, "Modernism and Abstraction: Treasures from the Smithsonian Museum of American Art."

That exhibit will be shown at the museum from August 1 to October 15. "There's never been anything like it in Maine," Gourley promised.



William McClosky, *Still Life with Oranges*, oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 24 1/8

Raspberry Advocates Less Negativism in News

Washington Post columnist William Raspberry, the 1999 Lovejoy journalism award recipient, used his address in November to take his profession to task for favoring conflict over substance and for reporting "what's gone wrong" to the virtual exclusion of "what's gone right."

Raspberry, whose commentary appears in more than 200 papers and who is renowned for his analysis of race relations, politics and social issues, received the 47th Elijah Parish Lovejoy award on November 12. Addressing a near-capacity crowd in Lorimer Chapel, he preached what he practices: constructive journalism.

"Our training, the news values we inculcate, the feedback we get from our editors—all these things encourage us to look for trouble, for failure, for scandal and, above all, for conflict," he said. Whether it's about the local school board or the U.S. Congress, the coverage is destructive if it causes readers to lose respect for the institutions of society. "The needs of a democracy—civil discourse—and the needs of a working journalist are at odds. One wants comity, the other loves conflict. It's a serious problem."

It has become a lazy habit of reporters to seek bad news, Raspberry said: "We'll walk past a dozen successful families in search of the disaster that illuminates the pathology of the ghetto."

Reviewing the importance of a free press and the privileges granted to reporters by the framers of the Constitution, Raspberry said, "Hell, we've got our own amendment—or at least part of an amendment. Doctors are granted no explicit right to practice their craft untrammelled. Lawyers aren't, nor are engineers or teachers. But



Washington Post columnist William Raspberry and Michelle-Nicolle Rahmings '01 in Lorimer Chapel, where Raspberry received the Lovejoy Award.

journalists are, and it seems to me that that extraordinary grant of privilege must mean something beyond the right to hector Pete Rose," he said, using Jim Gray's controversial interview during baseball's recent World Series as an example.

Calling for more good news is tricky, though. "If our pages were devoted to stories on Sunday School picnics and smoothly functioning agencies and B students, we argue, with such sweet reason, nobody would buy our papers," Raspberry said.

He presented as a possible model the sports section, where "the sterling play and all the up-side good stuff" is reported right along with "the bad plays and off-the-field misbehavior, the lackadaisical effort and idiotic recruiting decisions." A critical difference between news and sports sections is that readers and editors expect sportswriters not to be indifferent to their teams' success. "But if my colleagues on the sports pages of the *Washington Post* make clear that they'd like to see the Redskins and the Wizards succeed, those on the news side often seem not to care whether our city or our nation succeeds."

Before the speech President Bill Cotter presented Raspberry with an honorary doctor of laws degree and praised the combination of insightful analysis and common sense that has marked Raspberry's lifelong crusade for personal responsibility and social justice.

The Lovejoy award is given each year to honor the memory of Elijah Parish Lovejoy, valedictorian of Colby's Class of 1826, who became the first American martyr to freedom of the press when he was killed defending his newspaper against a pro-slavery mob in Illinois.

A Collaboration Not Without Precedent

Admirers of William Raspberry traveled from Massachusetts and New Hampshire to meet the man behind the pen and to hear his address at the 47th Lovejoy Convocation. One fan who didn't have to travel far, though, was Thomas Berger, the Carter Professor of Mathematics.

After Raspberry's speech Berger asked a question about the role that bylines play in the tenor of stories. Intrigued by a possible cause-and-effect relationship he had never pondered, Raspberry replied, "There may

be a column in that."

If so, it would be the second Raspberry column that Berger inspired. In 1989, when Berger was working for the National Science Foundation to reform math education and when George Bush was promising that U.S. students would be "first in the world" in math achievement by 2000, Raspberry published a series of columns questioning the content and direction of American math instruction. As is his custom, he invited discussion and turned his syndicated soap box

into a semi-public forum.

Four-fifths of a follow-up column consisted of quotes from a letter Berger wrote in reply. In it Berger complained that graduates of American schools and colleges ordinarily have seen little or no "real" math: "they have just learned to compute."

"In the beginning we make great progress. But as we approach our human limitations of skill, each little bit of improvement takes much more drill and practice. By fifth grade [a lot of people] know: 1) they

are worthless human beings; 2) they will never be able to do math, and 3) they hate math.

"We need to lead kids to think, lead them to question results and answers, lead them to solve interesting problems and stop lecturing at them and testing them with rote tests," Berger said.

After Raspberry's "I'll-have-to-get-back-to-you-on-that" reply to Berger's question about bylines in November, at least a few people are watching the op-ed pages, hoping for a sequel.

The Deeds of Didier

For Oak Human Rights Fellow, a glimmer of hope warrants total commitment

By Gerry Boyle '78

One day last fall, Didier Kamundu Batundi accompanied departing visitors from his Waterville apartment. Outside it was windy, cold and damp, but Kamundu set off in shirtsleeves. Unaccustomed to having to bundle up, he said, he was always leaving his jacket behind.

Was it commentary on weather in Maine, where Kamundu, a former human rights advocate in the Democratic Republic of Congo, was in residence as the second Oak Human Rights Fellow? Or was it a symptom of the state of exile Kamundu has been in since fleeing Congo with only the clothes—if not the jacket—on his back?

Kamundu, 29, a soft-spoken man whose self-effacing manner belies his courage, fled his country after his life was threatened by both the Kabila government and forces from neighboring Rwanda. Resettled in Lyons, France, with his wife and three young children, Kamundu spent the fall semester at Colby working to educate Americans about the plight of his country and continent.

Teaching is not new to Kamundu. But in Maine it was a new audience and a new message.

He spent earlier years venturing from the city of Goma to rural villages in territories of Masisi and North Kivu. There he and a colleague taught Congolese peasants to grow more and better crops. Kamundu also taught peasants that they had civil and political rights, concepts alien to them, and told the peasants it was up to them to

defend those rights.

In the Congo of recent years, this was a dangerous lesson.

The Goma-area population of 3 million swelled in 1994 when some 2 million refugees arrived from neighboring Rwanda, escapees from the horrific ethnic genocide there. In recent years Congo also has seen the ouster of long-time president Mobutu Sese Seko. That ouster has been accompanied by a multi-layered war that has pitted native Congolese against the Tutsi refugees from Rwanda, rebel forces against the Kabila government, Rwandan Hutus against the Congolese rebels.

Kamundu's countrymen have been mired in this quagmire, and his family, too. Asked how many family members died in the fighting, Kamundu said matter-of-factly, "Quarante-trois." Forty-three brothers, aunts, uncles, grandparents. He quickly pointed out that the 14 brothers he has lost were from his father's four polygamous marriages, customary in Congo.

Kamundu did not want his personal losses exaggerated, though the killing of 43 family members would appear to most Americans to be beyond exaggeration. He also glossed over his reported heroics, including rescuing a bus-load of refugees surrounded by a violent mob, saying he didn't do "anything extraordinary."

But the labyrinthine challenge that faces his country? "It is almost too much for one nation to escape from," he said, speaking in French through interpreter Morgan McDevitt '00. "It is up to us,

the people, to be strong."

Kamundu found his strength in law books rather than guns. The son of a farmer, he filed legal actions on behalf of people who were illegally imprisoned and tortured. He found that he not only had to challenge the government but also to convince war-weary Congolese that they had any rights at all.

He said the human rights organization he formed had many people working for it, many volunteers. And activists like him, working from the beginning? "Between three and five people," he said.

That group is now growing. And as the nucleus, Kamundu has attracted the attention of international human rights groups. He won the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1998, Colby's Oak Human Rights Fellowship in 1999. In November, Kamundu received the 1999 Global Youth Peace and Tolerance Young Adult Award, accepting the award at the United Nations. That event was followed by another at the Plaza Hotel in New York, where other honorees included Mikhail Gorbachev, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Zubin Mehta.

After being feted in New York, Kamundu returned to Waterville, to his apartment on Elm Street, next to the Waterville Public Library, and to his mission.

It is daunting but in Kamundu's mind not Sisyphean. As an exile, he will continue to work to try to lift the Congolese people out of their "misery," he said. It is very difficult to rebuild



Didier Kamundu Batundi

from wars that do not end, Kamundu said, and now economic disaster exacerbates his country's plight.

But wars do end, he said. Between 1975 and 1993, there were no ethnic wars in Congo. Neighboring countries like Benin and Tanzania have avoided ethnic strife. And other long-standing divisions on the continent, including apartheid, have been erased, Kamundu noted. It is up to the Congolese to help themselves and for countries like the United States to help as well, he said. So does he have hope for his country?

A difficult question, Kamundu said.

"One cannot say I have no hope," he said, with McDevitt interpreting. "But one cannot say I have a lot of hope."

And then Kamundu turned and summed it up.

"Oui et non," he said, his smile both soft and sad. "Pas trop."

Not a lot.

Committee on Race Prompts Debate

In a process worthy of Capitol Hill, a proposal to establish a multicultural affairs committee at Colby got bogged down in committee this fall, endured a veto and was being resuscitated in an altered form in December.

After a call by students last spring for a standing College committee on racial concerns, a debate ensued over whether that committee should be limited to matters of race or should include other aspects of diversity—sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity and gender, for example. In September the 35-member President's Council, the legislative branch of the Student Government Association (SGA), approved the formation of a committee with the broader mandate. Then, when the matter went to the College's Academic Affairs Committee in October, that body voted to include an "interlocking" or interacting committee on race and racism.

The interlocking committee had to go back to the Presidents' Council for approval. Some members felt the additional committee could only help focus attention on race-related problems. Others, including SGA President Ben Humphreys '00, felt a separate committee on race minimized the other issues that a multicultural committee might address. After much debate, the single interlocking committee was passed 17-9 by the Presidents' Council. But Humphreys vetoed it.

The debate crackled across campus and some students accused Humphreys of infringing on the democratic process. Humphreys proposed a system of six interlocking committees to deal with areas where bias and discrimination are potential problems. Interviewed in the *Echo* and on WMHB, Humphreys defended his veto, saying, "it would be morally reprehensible to not pay equal attention to all acts of discrimination and issues of multiculturalism."

The Presidents' Council bought Humphreys's six-committee plan in November, 17-8. Dissenters included Kenya Sanders '00, the Pugh Center Alliance representative, who was quoted in the *Echo*: "It's not fair for one person, especially a white heterosexual male, to decide that these committees are going to be created," she said.

Some students doubted the six-committee plan would pass. A compromise plan was in the works, and President Bill Cotter predicted it would prevail. Dean of Faculty Edward Yeterian reminded students that "it takes time to work through policy."

Uping the Ante to 128

Since 1975, Colby's graduation requirement has stood at 120 credit hours, but if approved by trustees, the Class of 2004 will need 128 credits for graduation.

In 1997 the Academic Affairs Committee set up a task force to study Colby's graduation requirements in comparison to peer colleges and Ivy League universities.

The task force discovered that over the past 12 years the number of Colby courses offered at four credits versus the traditional three has increased. This means a student can attain 120 credits by taking fewer than four courses per semester envisioned in the 1986 Educational Policy Committee Report. The anticipated increase "is designed to bring our graduation requirements more in line with peer institutions and to return to the normal four courses per semester (plus January credits) that we had in earlier years," Cotter said.

wit & wisdom

"Astronauts [returning from weightless conditions] who tilt their heads feel like they're moving sideways, which is why there's this big debate over whether they [or a computerized autopilot] should be allowed to land the Space Shuttle."

— **Jan Élise Holly** (mathematics), in a lecture titled "Why, Really, Do Pilots Become Disoriented Enough to Crash," about her research for NASA on mathematical models for predicting the types of disorientation that occur when humans are subjected to unusual motion conditions.

"Dispositional optimism is a good thing. There is tons and tons of evidence that being an optimistic person, generally, is related to less heart disease, less cancer, all sorts of things."

— **Bill Klein** (psychology), in a talk, "Positive and Negative Health Implications of Optimism."

"A case can be made that local capital is better than trans-national capital."

— **John Milton Talbot** (sociology), in a talk on how tea-, coffee- and cocoa-producing nations are affected when they build commodity chains from the bottom up as opposed to having foreign-based corporations control processing and distribution.

"On the other hand, I've had a lot of support from some of the goodest, oldest boys in Civil War history."

— **Elizabeth Leonard** (history), at a round-table discussion titled "Bias, Discrimination and the Historian's Craft," after describing hostility she has experienced for daring to suggest that women's history from the Civil War era is important.

"Scandal has a thousand stringers; good news doesn't know the editor's phone number."

— **William Raspberry**, 1999 Lovejoy Award recipient, on the relative ease of finding and writing negative news stories.

"A key to Hitler's power over the Germans was his ability as a speaker, which he and others discovered in revolutionary Munich in 1919. Here, historical empathy loses me. I find it impossible to feel the appeal of his speeches, which to me are a mass of angry, bellicose and petty moralistic barking. But in the context of the brutalization of politics through the First World War and the revolutionary period in its wake, I can understand that his rhetoric appealed to something larger—although it never captured the loyalty of the majority in an open society (until 1933)."

— **Raffael Scheck** (history), in a talk, "Who Was Hitler?"