

EMERITUS – December 2025

An occasional newsletter for the Emeritus Faculty Association



ZOOM MEETING:

Our next meeting is Friday, December 5, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. This will be virtual meeting using ZOOM. Information will be sent to your Stony Brook emails a few days prior to the meeting. Meeting information is also listed below.

Time: 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://stonybrook.zoom.us/j/93251596862?pwd=Y3bYfD2V8fc3wNjFxFxHTqjobQqEbY2o.1>

Meeting ID: 932 5159 6862

Passcode: 166445

SPEAKER: Our guest speaker will be April Masten, Department of History

Bio: April F. Masten is Professor of History at Stony Brook University. She specializes in the labor history of the visual and performance arts in 19th-century America.

Title: In 1844, the Bowery Amphitheatre housed a “Great Public Contest” between the two most celebrated jig dancers in the world – Irish American John Diamond and African American William Henry Lane, known as Juba. This rivalry was born from lower-class social interaction in the dockside markets, taverns, and theaters of antebellum New York. April Masten will recount this legendary match-up and introduce her new book *Diamond and Juba: The Raucous World of 19th-Century Challenge Dancing*, which tells the story of these extraordinary dancers and the Black-Irish cultural exchange that made them famous.



IN MEMORIAM:

Mel Pekarsky, 1934 - 2025

The Department of Art has lost one of its most influential faculty. Emeritus Professor Mel Pekarsky passed away on Sunday, October 12th.

For more than 40 years, Mel devoted his heart and soul to the Department of Art, serving at various times as Chair, MFA Director, and Studio Coordinator. His many contributions to the Department and the University cannot be overstated. Shortly after his arrival in 1974, Mel was instrumental in the establishment of a robust undergraduate studio curriculum to prepare our students to be competitive for graduate studies or for entering the job market. In the 1980s he was the driving force behind SUNY's acceptance of Stony Brook's bid to offer the first downstate three-year Master of Fine Arts degree program. Mel was also a staunch advocate of the importance of having studio art and art history in the same department as he worked with others to initiate the PhD program in Art History and Criticism in the early 1990s. He understood the value of experiential learning well before it became a requirement, demanding students at all levels professionalize their practice. Throughout his tenure at Stony Brook, Mel was tireless as a mentor for students and junior faculty alike. And he stayed in touch with our alumni, celebrating their achievements and keeping them engaged.

Beyond his many contributions at Stony Brook, Mel was especially proud of his role as a founding member of City Walls, Inc., an artist-run public art corporation that evolved into New York's Public Art Fund. He was long engaged with environmental issues and designed the posters for the first Earth Day. He was also deeply involved in the local art scene contributing expertise, energy, and time to Gallery North, the Reboli Center, the Patchogue Arts Council, and elsewhere.

Throughout his career, Mel was a prolific painter and consummate draftsman whose landscapes focused on images of the desert as icons of the earth's fragility, and on the tense and provocative relationship between abstraction and representation. Whether small sketches or expansive wall sized murals, his paintings are simultaneously intimate and infinite, barren and full of life in the same breath. Mel's work may be found in public and private collections across the United States and abroad. It was the focus of a solo exhibition at Zuccaire Gallery in 2010, Mel Pekarsky: Things in the Desert. Paintings, drawings and artist books, 1974-2008, and more recently in 2017 at Gallery North, Mel Pekarsky. Small Things, Quiet Places.

When faced with challenges, Mel would often say, “Onwards and Sideways...” surprisingly relevant in so many contexts. A former student reminded us of another of his favorite sayings: “It will all come out in the cosmic wash.” Wherever you are in the great cosmos, Mel, know you are already greatly missed.

Donations in memory of Mel can be made to:

The Nature Conservatory

Yeshiva University –

The Abe & Inda Pekarsky Scholarship - - yu.edu/Pekarsky



Mel Pekarsky, Near Santa Fe, 2021; oil on canvas; 12 x 16"



SAVE THE DATES: (First Friday of every month)

Here is a preview of our upcoming Spring speakers.

February 2026 – Nick Wilson, Sociology

March 2026 – Kathleen Johnstone, English

April 2026 – Kristen Nytray, Library, Special Collections

May 2026 – Tom Manuel, Music & The Jazz Loft



December 2025 Events Calendar

Saturday & Sunday, December 6 & 7 | 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM

29th Annual Charles Dickens Festival

Port Jefferson Village

Wednesday, December 17 | 7:00–8:00 PM

Nutcracker Suite + Holiday Classics JAZZ Style

The Avram - Southampton



Participate in the Faculty Emeritus Documentation Project

In an effort to document and preserve the unique and varied experiences of the university's emeritus faculty, a questionnaire has been designed to elicit the personal reflections of faculty members':

- impetuses for accepting academic positions at Stony Brook University.
- early experiences on the campus.
- views on the evolution and growth of the institution.
- contributions to departments and to the university.
- interactions with academic and administrative leadership.
- views on the institution's role in the community (local and wider).
- assessments of the university's mission and successes as a research university.

Your participation is vital to documenting Stony Brook University history.

Access information about the project and the questionnaire at:

<http://www.library.stonybrook.edu/special-collections-university-archives/university-archives/>



Emeritus Faculty Association (EFA) Member Update:



We're looking for members interested in joining the Emeritus Committee. This will give you a chance to pass the torch and share wisdom with the next generation. **Please contact Joel.Rosenthal@stonybrook.edu for more information.**

The Provost's Office has updated the EFA's member list! Below is the link for the updated contact information for all members. Please take a look and let us know if you notice any out-of-date or incorrect information about yourself or a colleague, please contact Faith Mirabile at faith.mirabile@stonybrook.edu with any changes. Please remember, we are **only** using your Stony Brook emails.

<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/emeritus/members.html>

To visit our website, go to the University website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/emeritus/index.html>. It always contains the latest emeritus news (click on "Next Meeting"), a list of members' email addresses, a list of officers, newsletter archives and many other useful links.

Enjoy the Holidays!

