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Editor's Note

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Editor's Note

The early 1940s witnessed the rise of a school of modern art that elevated New York City over Paris as the center of the avant-garde art world. The most famous painter of this so-called New York School was Jackson Pollock, whose drip paintings were immortalized in 1949 by a spread in *Life*, the most popular magazine of the era. The main sculptor of the New York School was David Smith, whose monumental works often looked like or were made from industrial waste. In August of 1974, Newport hosted *Monumenta*, a bold showing of outdoor sculpture by artists of and inspired by the New York School. As it took over the waterfront tourist district, the manicured lawns of mansions, and the picturesque cliffs of Ocean Drive, *Monumenta* provoked strong reactions, both pro and con.

In this issue of *Newport History*, Diane Patrella revisits this important exhibition with a detailed article on *Monumenta* that charts its history, visual content, and critical impact. Ms. Patrella adapted this article from an undergraduate thesis produced for Salve Regina University, from which she received her B.A. in Art History in June of 2006. Triggering her interest in the topic was the gift to Salve Regina University in the summer of 2005 of a large repository papers and photographs related to *Monumenta*. The donors of this were William A. and Gael Crimmins of Middletown, two of the key figures in the organization of *Monumenta*. Mr. Crimmins also allowed Ms. Patrella to conduct a lengthy interview in order to have more material for her study.

William A. Crimmins also granted permission for the journal to reproduce a lecture on *Monumenta* delivered on 10 September 2004 as part of *Monumenta Redux*, a thirty-year commemorative exhibit of photographs and other artifacts related to *Monumenta*. Mr. Crimmins was born in London in 1929 and lived in Ireland as a young child while attending St. Mary's School in Chislehurst, Kent, England. In 1938, his family relocated to Maryland. Until 1955, he lived at Baltimore and summered at Camden, Maine. His education continued during these years at Fessenden School in West Newton, Massachusetts, before moving in 1942 to the Portsmouth Priory School in Portsmouth. He entered collegiate programs at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts (1949-1950), Northeastern and Boston Universities (1950-1951), Notre Dame University (1951-1955), and St. Louis University (1955-1956). His employment included work for Bridges Construction Co. in Searsport, Maine (1948), the R. L. Day & Co. in Boston (1950-1951), and the Portsmouth Priory School (1957-1972). Mr. Crimmins has many interests, reflected by his role as a co-founder of four diverse organizations: the Monastery of Christ in the Desert in Abiquiu, New Mexico; the Newport Music Festival, the Newport Cultural Commission; and the Pennfield School, recently relocated to Sandy Point Avenue in Portsmouth. He is also a life member of the NAACP and the Southern Poverty Law Center, as well as a Fellow the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence and the American School of Heraldry. Prior to organizing and producing *Monumenta* in 1974, Mr. Crimmins served as a producer for *Pilgrimage*, a film invited to the prestigious La Semaine des Critiques at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972 and now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

In the wake of *Monumenta*, artistic modernism got a boost in Newport when Judith Richardson Silvia arrived from the New York gallery scene in 1975. Assuming directorship of the Art Association of Newport, Silvia spent the next two years producing exhibits that featured the leading avant-garde artists of the era, including Christo, Jim Dine, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenberg, Robert Rauschenberg, George Segal, and Andy Warhol. Nancy Whipple Grinnell has made this the subject of an article that mines the Newport Art Museum Archives for a look back at Silvia's contribution to modernism in Newport. Ms. Grinnell holds a B.A. in Art History from the University of Pittsburgh (1970), a Masters in Library Science from Simmons College in Boston (1973), and a second Masters in American Civilization from Brown University (2004). Since 1998, she has been Curator of the Newport Art Museum. In the spring of 2005, she published a major study in *Newport History* on Maud Howe Elliott, one of the Art Association's founders.



Lila Katzen's stainless-steel Oracle provided a meditative perch for two visitors to Monumenta in 1974. All illustrations in this article are courtesy of the William and Gael Crimmins Papers and Photos on Monumenta, Salve Regina University Special Collections, McKillop Library, Salve Regina University, Newport.