Black Mountain College was an incubator for experimental music and dance in America. Students studied dance with Merce Cunningham and Katherine Litz, learned music composition from Heinrich Jalowetz, John Cage, Stefan Wolpe, and Lou Harrison, and presented numerous plays. They practiced during the day and put on recitals in the evening, making performance an integral part of life and education at the college. Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933–1957 brings live performance into the galleries, offering visitors a full experience of artistic creation at the college. On the grand piano and sprung dance floor, dancers, musicians, and local students learn and perform works by the many choreographers and composers who taught at the college. The ICA has also invited contemporary artists to reimagine key moments of Black Mountain College’s history, to bring the college’s experimental and interdisciplinary pedagogy into dialogue with art, life, and learning today.
DANCE
Katherine Litz
Polly Motley performs The Glygh
Dancer and choreographer Polly Motley performs The Glyph, a whimsical work choreographed by dance teacher Katherine Litz at Black Mountain College in 1953. Reconstructed under the direction of Richard Calson, The Glyph is performed for the first time since the 1970s.

MECE CUNNINGHAM
Sils Riener Performs Changeling
Former Cunningham dancer Sils Riener performs Changeling, an early Merce Cunningham solo choreographed using chance procedures. Reconstructed under the direction of Jean Treesbery, Changeling had its première in 1957 on the Brooklyn Academy of Music and was last performed in Tokyo in 1984.

Boston Conservatory students perform excerpts from early Cunningham dances
Under the direction of Sils Riener, Boston Conservatory students perform excerpts from early Cunningham dances, including DancerDance, Springweather and People, Sleepy, Nocturne, and Miniluce.

Harvard students experiment with Cunningham choreographic ideas
Working with Sils Riener and Jill Johnson, Harvard Dance Project students perform their own work based upon experiments with Cunningham’s ideas, strategies, and movement.

MUSIC
Pianists Stephen Drury and Yoko Takagi perform works by John Cage, Iiu Hansen, and Christian Wolff to accompany the dance performances.

Chamber Music
Local musicians rehearse and perform John Cage’s String Quartet in Four Parts, which premiered at the college in 1950.

John Cage and Pierre Boulez: Correspondence
Soloists from the Paris-based Ensemble Intercontemporain perform works by Cage and Boulez. Damon Krukowski reads excerpts from their 1950-1954 correspondence. (B-15-28)

John Cage’s Prepared Piano
Elena Răduță performs a piano to Cage’s specifications—by inserting screws, erasers, paper clips, and other objects into the strings—and performs selections from Cage’s famous Sonatas and Interludes.

NOVEMBER

1 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
2 pm The Artist’s Voice
3 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
4 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
5 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
6 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
7 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
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30 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
31 2 pm Performance Art Workshop

FERRARI MURRAY
All events take place in the galleries and are free with admission (except where noted).

OCTOBER

1 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
2 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
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DECEMBER

1 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
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JANUARY

1 New Year’s Day
2 11:30 am-12:30 pm Theatrical Workshop
3 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
4 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
5 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
6 2 pm Performance Art Workshop
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PERFORMANCE
THEATER PIECE NO. 1 X 50
Declared the first Happening and later named “Theater Piece No. 1” on an uneventful performance took place in August 1952 at Black Mountain College that would become one of the most famous events in the college’s history. The ICA has invited five Boston-based artists to reimage Theater Piece No. 1 by proposing a series of acts that will take place in the ICA galleries and throughout the museum.

Passing Time: Jonathan Cohn integrates archival images, texts, and soundscapes to create a slide show and performance that uncovers forgotten moments and memorials in the cultural legacy of Black Mountain College.

Poets in Ekphrasis: Danielle Legros Georges draws on the rich history of avant-garde poetry at Black Mountain College and models several noted poets to read verse inspired by artworks in the exhibition.

Theater Piece No. 1 Revisited: Damon Krukowski employs the same five simultaneous but uncoordinated actions used in the original performance at Black Mountain College: prose, poetry, recorded music, live music, and dance.

Music Listens Back: Timothy McCormick explores current experimental developments in contemporary composition through a series of gallery performances inspired by the radical reimagining of musical thought by John Cage.

Performance Art Workshop: Kelly Neeper invites her MIT class to develop a set of acts inspired by their own experimental artistic community, with its unique rituals, missions, ethics, and aesthetics.

RECURRING EVENTS
Public Tours: Free guided tours of the exhibition (usually Thursdays at 7 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays at 2:00 pm; except holiday weekends).

Pop-Up Talks: ICA Visitors Associates lead 15-minute discussions on artworks every Friday evening.

Learning by Doing: Massachusetts College of Art & Design students host hands-on activities in the galleries and Bank of America Art Lab.

Play Dates: Special family activities offered on the last Saturday of every month except December. Free admission for up to two adults per family accompanied by children ages 12 and under.

Teen Nights: Teen-focused events featuring teen-led art projects, and music and youth performances. Free admission for all teens.
TALKS + TOURS

CURATORIAL DEPARTMENT TOURS
OCT 10, 11 AM
OCT 11, 11 AM
Members of the ICA's Curatorial Department introduce visitors to Leap Before You Look: Black Mountain College 1933-1957 through informative tours of the exhibition.

ARTIST RESPONSE: ARE
OCT 17, 1 PM
Artists Helen Miller and Joshua Hart of ARE (Aesthetic Relational Exercises) lead visitors through simple artistic exercises in response to art found in Leap Before You Look. For information on registration, please visit icaboston.org.

ICA FORUM: On Immigration and Black Mountain College
OCT 18, 1 PM

THE ARTIST'S VOICE: Sara VanDerBeek on Stanley VanDerBeek
OCT 29, 7 PM
American photographer Sara VanDerBeek explores the many artistic contributions of her father, Stan VanDerBeek, Black Mountain College student from 1949 to 1951.

THE ARTIST'S VOICE:
Theater Piece No. 1 x 50
NOV 5, 7 PM
Artists Jonathan Calm, Danielle Legros Georges, Damon Krukowski, Timothy McCormack, and Kelly Nipper discuss their intensive participation in Theater Piece No. 1 x 50, a distinctive project addressing the legacy of Black Mountain College.

ICA FORUM: On Education and Black Mountain College
DEC 3, 7 PM
Artist Danielle Abrams presents a new 20-minute performance that explores the topics of progressive education and racial integration as experienced at Black Mountain College. Moderated by Steve Seidel, Harvard University.

ICA FORUM: On Sexuality and Black Mountain College
JAN 24, 1 PM
Author and scholar Jonathan Katz of the University at Buffalo, SUNY, addresses issues of sexuality and its importance to the history of midcentury American art. Moderated by Ruth Erickson, ICA/Boston.