Is there a link between creativity and madness? Or is it myth? Through the lens of literature, art, music, and dance, this age-old notion will be examined and challenged at the Vermont Humanities Council’s fall conference.

Creativity and Madness: 
*Romantic Notion and Reality*

**VERMONT HUMANITIES COUNCIL — 2005 ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE**

**November 11 and 12 • 7:00 PM FRIDAY AND ALL DAY SATURDAY**

Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa • Stowe, Vermont

**PIANO CONCERT • KEYNOTE SPEAKERS • BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Jackson Pollock • Vincent Van Gogh • Edvard Munch • Edgar Allan Poe 
F. Scott Fitzgerald • Sylvia Plath • Robert Schumann • Anne Sexton 
Virginia Woolf Vaslav Nijinsky • Eugene O’Neill • Ernest Hemingway

During her Saturday keynote address, “The Creating Brain: The Neuroscience of Genius,” Nancy Andreasen, M.D., Ph.D., will discuss the notion that human creativity and mental instability go hand-in-hand. She will also share her research on the neuroscience of creativity and mental illness. Her research dates to her groundbreaking study with writers at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop in the 1970s. She is editor-in-chief of the American Journal of Psychiatry.

In the afternoon, Stanley “Huck” Gutman, Ph.D., University of Vermont professor, will discuss “Creativity, Madness, and Confessional Poetry,” giving attention to the “confessional poets” of the 1950s and ’60s—Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, and Robert Lowell.

Breakout discussions will delve into the Ballets Russes, Virginia Woolf, Edgar Allan Poe, painters and madness, and alcoholism and the writings of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and O’Neill.

Lodging - Accommodations are left to the individual. Rooms at the Stoweflake Mountain Resort are $110 single/$120 double on a first-come, first-served basis. For reservations, 800.253.2232 or 802.253.7355, or www.stoweflake.com. Be sure to mention the conference to receive the special conference rate.

Contact - 802.262.2626 • info@vermonthumanities.org • www.vermonthumanities.org
Breakout Sessions

Participants attend one session in the morning and another in the afternoon. Readings will be mailed prior to the conference. Every breakout session except one runs twice.

Genius in a Bottle? Artistic Excellence and Alcohol –


Poe’s Perversity in Life and Literature – Edgar Allan Poe lived life on the edge — exactly how sharp that edge was is unclear. There is no doubt that Poe’s poetry, criticism, and prose go in unusual directions, including premature burial, bloody revenge for imagined slights, and “the perverse,” the irresistible urge to do something that contradicts one’s interests. Readings: “The Imp of the Perverse,” “The Black Cat,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Purloined Letter.” Facilitator: Jack McDonald, associate professor of English, Saint Michael’s College.


Virginia Woolf: Madness, Modernism, or the Mystery of Genius? – Did Woolf’s “madness” spark her literary genius? Or was she responding to the madness of the first World War? Or did she suffer from the “ache of modernism” that Thomas Hardy described in Tess of the D’Urbervilles? Readings: Mrs. Dalloway.

Facilitator: Geraldine Pittman de Batlle, professor of literature and writing, Marlboro College.

The Writing Brain: Writers, Creativity, and Mental Illness – Dr. Andreasen describes her research with writers and what we can learn from studying their lives—and their brains. What is it about the writing life that can go hand-in-hand with mental instability? What may her brain imaging studies of schizophrenics—which reveal discernible structural and functional abnormalities—suggest for future research? Afternoon only. Facilitator: Nancy Andreasen, M.D., Ph.D.

Plenary Speakers

Richard Kogan -
co-director, Human Sexuality Program,
New York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill-Cornell Medical Center.

Nancy Andreasen-
Andrew H. Woods
Chair of Psychiatry and
director, Mental Health Clinical Research Center, University of Iowa; adjunct professor of Psychiatry, University of New Mexico; and
director, MIND Institute, New Mexico.

Huck Gutman -
former Fulbright scholar; professor of English, University of Vermont.
VHC Fall Conference Registration Form

**Conference fee** – The $95 fee includes Friday evening’s performance and reception; Saturday’s meals; and reading materials. (Friday night only is $15.) Space is limited; registration is first-come, first-served. Students and teachers are encouraged to attend.

**Registration and payment deadline is October 28;** after the deadline, registrations will be accepted as space is available. **Cancellations:** refund less $25 fee until October 28; no refund after October 28. A few scholarships are available—deadline is October 21. Conference and scholarship forms are available online. An on-site bookstore will be open during the day. One person per form. Make checks payable to [Vermont Humanities Council](#) and send to 11 Loomis Street, Montpelier, Vermont 05602 or fax to 802.262.2620.

First name ___________________________ Last name ___________________________

Mailing address ___________________________

Town ___________________________ State ______ Zip _________________

Phone (day) ___________________________ E-mail ___________________________

Vegetarian meals? (circle) Yes No First VHC conference? (circle) Yes No

Special needs? ___________________________

Fee: $95 Full registration $ _________________

$15 Friday night only $ _________________

Conference scholarship donation $ _________________

Total due $ _________________

Check enclosed for $ _________________

Charge to (circle) Visa MC Exp. date _______ Card no. ___________________________

Signature ___________________________

Check if applicable _____ I am a teacher and need a participation letter for teacher recertification.

**Morning session** *(rank preference, 1–5)*

_____ Genius in a Bottle? Artistic Excellence and Alcohol

_____ Madness on the Canvas: Edvard Munch, Vincent Van Gogh, and Jackson Pollock

_____ Poe’s Perversity in Life and Literature

_____ Leaps Into Madness: Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes

_____ Virginia Woolf: Madness, Modernism, or the Mystery of Genius?

**Afternoon session** *(rank preference, 1–6)*

_____ Genius in a Bottle? Artistic Excellence and Alcohol

_____ Madness on the Canvas: Edvard Munch, Vincent Van Gogh, and Jackson Pollock

_____ Poe’s Perversity in Life and Literature

_____ Leaps Into Madness: Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes

_____ Virginia Woolf: Madness, Modernism, or the Mystery of Genius?

_____ The Writing Brain: An In-depth Look at Writers, Creativity, and Mental Illness