



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 •



**A**claimed pianist and psychiatrist Richard Kogan, M.D., opens the conference Friday evening with **“Schumann: Music, Mood Swings, and Madness.”** His program blends brilliant performance with a talk about Robert Schumann’s emotionally turbulent life. The *New York Times* called Kogan’s performance “exquisite playing...eloquent and compelling.”

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](http://www.stoweflake.com). Be sure to mention the conference to receive the special conference rate.

**Contact** - 802.262.2626 • [info@vermonthumanities.org](mailto:info@vermonthumanities.org)  
• [www.vermonthumanities.org](http://www.vermonthumanities.org)

## Fall Conference Schedule

### Friday, November 11

- 4:00–6:00 PM** **Registration**, Collins Reception Area, Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa
- 7:00 PM** **“Schumann: Music, Mood Swings, and Madness,”** presentation and performance by Richard Kogan, M.D., Stowe Community Church
- 8:30 PM** **Reception**, Fellowship Hall, Stowe Community Church

### Saturday, November 12

- 7:30 AM** **Registration and continental breakfast**, Collins Reception Area, Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa
- 9:00 AM** **Welcome by Peter Gilbert**, VHC Executive Director and presentation of Victor R. Swenson Humanities Educator Award
- 9:30 AM** **“The Creating Brain: The Neuroscience of Genius,”** keynote address by Dr. Nancy Andreasen
- 10:30 AM** **Break**
- 10:45 AM** **Breakout sessions**
- 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?
- 12:00 PM** **Buffet lunch**
- 1:15 PM** **“Creativity, Madness, and Confessional Poetry,”** afternoon plenary session by Huck Gutman, Ph.D.
- 2:15 PM** **Break**
- 2:30 PM** **Breakout sessions**
- Same as above with the addition of:*
- The Writing Brain: An In-depth Look at Writers, Creativity, and Mental Illness
- 4:00 PM** **Facilitator panel, breakout sessions in brief**
- 5:00 PM** **Conference ends**

## 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 –**

Recent scholarship suggests a relationship between artistic excellence and mind-altering substances. Examine the relation between alcohol and the work of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and O’Neill. **Readings:** Fitzgerald’s “The Crack-Up,” O’Neill’s *A Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, and Hemingway’s “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” and selections from *A Moveable Feast*. **Facilitator:** Andrew Knauf, Norwich University writing and literature professor.

### **Madness on the Canvas: Edvard Munch, Vincent Van Gogh, and Jackson Pollock –**

What is the relationship between artistic accomplishment, emotional disturbance, and substance abuse? **Readings:** “Edvard Munch: The Creative Search for Self,” by Lawrence Warick and Elaine Warick, “Vincent Van Gogh: Creativity and Madness” by Barry Panter, and “Jackson Pollock and the Unconscious” by Michael Leja. **Facilitator:** Amy Werbel, associate professor of Fine Arts, Saint Michael’s College.

**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, professor of English, Saint Michael’s College.

### **Leaps Into Madness: Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes –**

Vaslav Nijinsky (1889–1950), a legendary male dancer and an iconoclastic choreographer, spent the last thirty years of his life in sanitariums struggling with diagnosed schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis or bipolar affective disorder. Consider this fate within the context of the historical connection between dance and madness. **Readings:** selections from *Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap Into Madness*, by Peter Ostwald, *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky: The Unexpurgated Edition*, edited by Joan Acocella, and *Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes* by Lynn Garafola. **Facilitator:** Andrew Wentink, dance historian and head of Special Collections, Middlebury 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