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## Arthur Hillman

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## **Simon's Rock Oral History Project**

Interviewee: **Arthur Hillman**  
(Faculty in the Arts 1974 - 2011)

Interviewer: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**  
Transcriber: **Russell Miller, College Archivist**

Date: **August 9, 2005**

Location: **Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington, MA**

Collection: **Simon's Rock College Archives**

Contact: **archives@simons-rock.edu**

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## **Interview with Arthur Hillman**

**August 9, 2005**

**Simon's Rock of Bard College (aka Bard College at Simon's Rock)**

**Selected excerpts from the Oral History Project interview. The full transcript may be restricted. To request access please contact the [Simon's Rock College Archives](#).**

**Keywords:** ARC, photography, Baird Whitlock, merger, Bard, Bill Jackson, Eunice Agar, Alison Bechdel, DAC, Daniel Arts Center

“There really were no facilities at all. There was one rusty enlarger, and a couple of trays. What we wound up doing is to convert the basement of the ARC, which floods every once in awhile. I remember being there with a staple gun, and putting up wires on the ceiling. It was really rough. We had a sump pump because it did flood. But we got a couple of enlargers over the next couple of years. We spent a number of years there. It was interesting, because right from the beginning there were a lot of students interested in photography.”

“What [the Daniel Arts Center] has is space, and new facilities, and new equipment, and I think we all feel that the students take everything much more seriously. They feel like they're in a professional environment. They take better care of things, and they're just more into it. So that's been really nice. It's nice to have a nice, fresh office, even though it's packed! We were able to develop certain areas that we couldn't at the ARC because of space – all the 3-D stuff. It was really a fire hazard, and [there were] safety issues, and we couldn't offer a lot of things. Now we have this amazing shop. A whole facility. So it's hard to complain about it. And this is developing a spirit of its own. It's just when you're in one place for so long-- the memories I have of students are connected to that space.”

“I had a student years ago, Alison Bechdel, who was a really good printmaking student. I remember sitting with her, looking at her work in the ARC as if it were yesterday. It was probably twenty years, twenty-five years ago. I remember talking to Eileen Handelman at one point, and we were talking about the fact that...I guess I was kind of surprised that students who were really good in the arts were often times really good in a lot of other things, including the sciences. I mentioned Alison as being one of my top students, and she said, ‘Well, she's my top physics student.’ I thought that was neat.”

“So you get to know the kids. If somebody's photographing every week, and you look at their contact sheets, you know a lot about those kids! Their hang-ups, their romantic interests, their families. I don't know how many times I've seen photographs of parents before I actually see the parents, and have a sense of who they are. But it's certainly that intimacy, I think in larger places it probably works the same way, but it's when you're

working with a thesis student or you have a star student, or a student you bring into your research or something like that. But here I think it's pretty much the whole group."

"Not only do you teach your classes, but you advise, and you don't know what to advise because you don't know the system, and you don't know what's right. Then you get thrown into the Seminars, which for many of us is so foreign to what we've studied and what we've done. So there's so many pressures. Small classes are great, and that's what I think attracts a lot of faculty, but there's a pressure when you have to deal with everybody. You can't just do this lecture that you've done twelve times before. So, as I say, I don't think we recognize, officially or unofficially, how hard it is for somebody who's starting here. Even if they're totally enthusiastic, they don't know what they're getting into. They really don't. There's just so much that you have to deal with. But I think most faculty learn that by trial and error. I think that's the way to do it. I don't think anyone can hand you a guidebook, and you read it, and you know what to do."