



## MHEAC SPRING NEWSLETTER

### Connecting alums across Europe

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#### Welcome Message

#### **A Word from the European Council Chair**

Dear all,

With spring upon us, I hope you are doing well and am happy to share latest news and inspirational notes from across our alum community in Europe. In the last few months, we've enjoyed a variety of formal and informal gatherings with alums of all ages and regions, with more ahead, so please read on and mark your calendars! Thematic gatherings virtually and in person have also emerged as a great way for us to learn from each other. Congratulations to the Alums in the Arts for getting that connection going!

While geopolitical tensions seem to continue to escalate all around us, we strive to keep a positive outlook and stand by the values that makes us strong. After such rich discussion at the Munich symposium just a few months ago on the interplay between freedom of expression and democracy, we're seeing those fundamental rights come under pressure, in particular on US college campuses recently. We provide our full support to the College in navigating through these challenging times.

Starting with this issue of the newsletter, we are thrilled to relaunch a feature that celebrates the diverse achievements of remarkable Mount Holyoke alums

in Europe. I hope you will enjoy these spotlights on three distinguished alums who have recently published new books. Although all three books represent a variety of genres, the common thread between them is true brilliance and a shared passion for storytelling. Curiosity, creativity, intellectual exploration and development shine through in the personal and professional developments of Kiki Denis '94, Kristin Duncombe '91, and Mariam Navaid Ottimofiore '05, who have kindly shared their literary journeys for this issue. The bond they share with Mount Holyoke is reflected in their work, showing how the College nurtures a lifelong love for learning, self-expression, and community.



As we continue to celebrate the voices emerging from our alum network, we're eager to feature further talented individuals in future editions. If you know an alum in Europe whose work or accomplishments should be highlighted, please contact us and help us showcase the passion, leadership and dedication that make us so proud to be part of the Mount Holyoke community!

Please feel free to reach out to me at [mhc.european@gmail.com](mailto:mhc.european@gmail.com) with any questions or suggestions for new and exciting ways of engaging with fellow alums across Europe.

Warm regards,

Catherine Jourdan '95  
Chair, European Alum Council

Stay current by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), our [website](#), and the [Mount Holyoke European Alum Newsletter](#).

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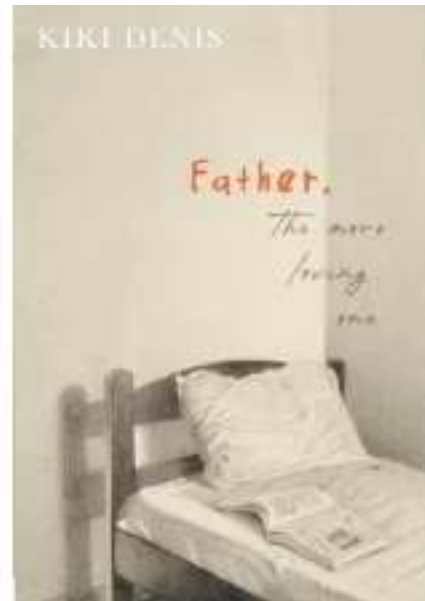
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## Spotlight: Celebrating Uncommon Alums in Europe

### Kiki Denis '94



*MHC supported me in discovering myself, expanding my horizons, and embracing who I was becoming, without fear of the outcome or the pressure to conform. In fact, it was only in my thirties, after a career in fashion in the US, that I took to creative writing and now live in Paris. After my father passed, I was inspired to write FATHER, THE MORE LOVING ONE. He was a Greek barber with little formal education, unknowingly making a profound impact on his daughter's life, simply by reading to her for five minutes each night... Continue reading [here](#).*

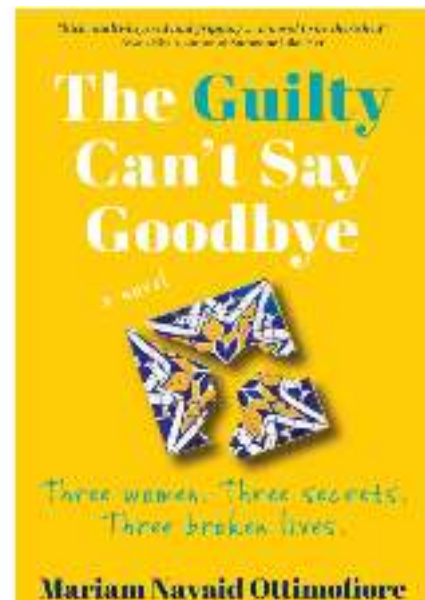
### Kristin Duncombe '91





*Having lived in many countries as a child and an adult, I have come to call Paris the home of my heart. I enjoy writing about real life. A true story well told is one the greatest healers and role models for anyone struggling to understand their own life. If I could turn back time, I would re-do my MHC years to take advantage fully of everything the school had to offer. As I write about in my most recent book, OBJECT, I arrived at MHC just six years after the major crisis of my childhood... Continue reading [here](#).*

## **Mariam Navaid Ottimofiore '05**



*MHC helped me figure out not only who I was, but how to build bridges with people who are different from me. It was my first 'international tribe'. Having lived in ten different countries, and now in Portugal, where my latest novel THE GUILTY CAN'T SAY GOODBYE is set, I enjoy writing about global living. It complements my journey as a global citizen, helping me to make sense of my ever-changing identity, home and sense of belonging in the world. I remember the exact moment that inspired me to write... Continue reading [here](#).*

**Enjoy!**

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## Come Forward! MHC Art Working Group



Are you interested in connecting with fellow alums and MHC students involved in the arts (visual arts, music, theatre, dancers, writers, filmmakers, actors etc)? The group, spearheaded by Anne Gabrielle Boucher '13 in the UK, came together following the recent European Symposium in Munich. It includes artists, curators, museum administrators, and creative individuals looking to collaborate, share resources and foster a global artistic Mount Holyoke community.

They begin their meetings by sharing a little bit about their own artistic practice and then continue with strategizing ways to connect with current Mount Holyoke students and form formal initiatives with alums and students.

Feel free to join them for the next meeting over Zoom on Saturday, March 29: **5 pm GMT // 6 pm CEST // 10 pm Lahore // 1 pm EST**

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74359671882pwd=edtqbNC525gUTQHVaOGCfZhatUOH3.1>

Meeting ID: [743 5967 1882](#)

Passcode: 4WjLUS

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out to Anne at: [annegabrielleb@gmail.com](mailto:annegabrielleb@gmail.com).

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## Lunar New Year



Lunar New Year celebration supporting international students is a great success!

Thanks to all alums who shared joyful Lunar New Year greetings and ushered in the Year of the Snake. Inspired by the generous support of an anonymous alum donor, 375 members of the global community shared special messages as part of the Red Envelope Challenge, unlocking a gift of \$1,888 in support of scholarship aid for international students via The Mount Holyoke Fund. The challenge was spearheaded by the Global Alum Alliance.

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## Past & Upcoming Events by Country

### **Bulgaria – Tzvetomira Laub '05**





### **Mountain Day 2024**

Great Mountain Day gathering in Sofia in mid-October.



### **March 2025**

Alums in Bulgaria met for dinner on International Women 's Day. It was a great opportunity to catch up and celebrate this important day!

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## Denmark – Evelina Poumpalova '97



**December 2024**

In December the local MHEAC delegate warmly welcomed a fellow alum visiting from Germany.

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## France – Barbara Greer '79 & Méryem Puill Châtillon '80





#### October 2024

Traditional Mountain Day event on October 13th at the Buttes Chaumont park with a walk, which is now named in honor of Marcia Mead Lèbre. Six alums participated.



#### November 2024

The planned outdoor tour in the Jardin des Plantes on November 21st to see hundreds of illuminated lanterns was cancelled due to an early snow storm. Four intrepid alums braved the weather to meet up for a drink in the Marais.



#### December 2024

Alums and students celebrated the festive season with a gathering at Kiki Denis's home in Neuilly. It was a fabulous meeting of past, present and future Mount Holyoke siblings!

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## Georgia & Armenia – Deborah Wild '97



#### September 2024

Deborah Wild '97 hosted Swedish MHEAC delegate Nisha Nilsson '91 during a visit to Tbilisi.





### Mountain Day 2024

Nisha Nilsson '91 with US alum stationed in Armenia, member of the class of '05.

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## Germany – Catherine Jourdan '95







### **August & September 2024**

Dumpling workshops for local and visiting alums in Berlin!



### **Mountain Day 2024**

Joyful celebrations in Munich, with Catherine Jourdan '95 and two other local alums.



### November 2024

Local alums meeting in Leipzig, continuing a well-established annual tradition.



### December 2024

Christmas Market in Munich



### December 2024

Christmas Market in Frankfurt



## Upcoming Events!

**Date:** Sunday, 30th March

**Time:** 17:30–18:30

**Location:** Virtual

Bi-annual virtual catch-up to share updates and topics of mutual interest among our alum community in Germany.

Link: <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/94262579919>

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**Date:** Friday, 2nd May

**Time:** 17:00–22:00

**Location:** Munich

Frühlingsfest at the Wiesn. 75 EUR per person, which includes 60 EUR vouchers for food and drinks, entry and musical entertainment all evening; table reserved 3 rows back from the band; significant others welcome; first come, first served.

Sign up by contacting Catherine and paying by April 15th.

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**Date:** Sunday, 18th May

**Time:** 15:00–17:00

**Location:** Munich

Visit of the exhibit "Civilization: The Way We Live Now" at the Kunsthalle (<https://www.kunsthalle-muc.de/en/preview/>) and catch-up afterwards at the Café-Restaurant-Theatiner-8. Everyone covers their own admission at the door and any food and drinks at the café. To help us plan for the size of the group and reserve a table, RSVP to Catherine by May 10.

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## Great Britain – Virginia Ross '66



Mountain Day 2024 in London





**Mountain Day in Edinburgh**



**Mountain Day in St Andrews**



#### **October 2024**

The Club was honoured to have **President Holley** as our special guest for the **2024 AGM in London** on October 29th. Thirty alums welcomed President Holley, **Kavita Khory '84**, Ruth Lawson Professor of Politics, and Alum Association Executive Director, **Trisha Tanner '00**, who stopped off on the way to the European Alum Council Munich symposium. President Holley shared "her insights into the integral role of alums in the audacious plan for our alma mater's future" and met GB-based alums, which was especially nice for those

who were unable to go to the Munich symposium. A reception gave alums a chance to talk with the college guests and to socialise with one another.

Following an enjoyable AGM, the club has pivoted to planning for the 18th European Alum Symposium that will be held in Edinburgh! According to Corinne Morgan, the committee will share details as we get closer to what promises to be a fantastic weekend in Edinburgh in the Autumn of 2026.



## Upcoming Events!

**Date:** Thursday, 8th May

**Time:** 18:00 – 20:00

**Location:** Ben Elwes Fine Art, 45 Maddox St, London W1S 2PE

Book Launch: The Art and Life of Francesca Alexander 1837–1917

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**Date:** Saturday, 17th May

**Time:** TBA

**Location:** TBA in London and Edinburgh

The annual Laurel Lunch, which often coincides with Commencement ceremonies at the college.

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**Date:** Thursday, 26th June

**Time:** 18:00

**Location:** The Dickens Inn, 50 St Katharine's Way, London E1W 1LA

Pub Night!

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**Date:** Saturday, 19th July

**Time:** 14:00

**Location:** Regent's Park

Annual Family Picnic

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**M&Cs** is still going strong after five years and welcomes all alums!

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## Greece – Ioli Christopoulou '01



### Mountain Day 2024

A festive gathering took place in Athens in early November. Participants had a great time, shared updates and enjoyed the *uncommon* positive energy (much needed)!

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## Iberian Peninsula – Elizabeth Ta’eed ’09





### February 2025

Alums in Spain got together in Malaga to enjoy the rich culture, beauty and food offered by this amazing Andalusian city. A visit to the renowned Picasso Museum was one of the highlight of the day.



**March 2025**

Portuguese- German summit in Estremoz, bringing together alums who had met during the latest European Alum Symposium in Munich!

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## **Ireland – Barbara Schmidt '69**



**January 2025**



Four Irish alums (and two children) visited the Sarah Purser Exhibition in the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin. Sarah Purser was a pivotal figure in Irish art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as an artist and an organiser. The visit was followed by lunch in the gallery cafe.

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## Kosovo



### Mountain Day 2024

Special greetings and ice cream from two alum neighbors in the same building in Kosovo.

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## The Netherlands – Silvia Maulini '80







### Mountain Day 2024

Dutch alums and guests enjoyed a very interesting visit to Depot in Rotterdam, the world's first publicly accessible art storage facility, with more than 154,000 items housed together in fourteen storage compartments with five different climates. Three study abroad students joined from Maastricht, making the day extra special. There was time to (re)connect with old and new friends and to enjoy lunch on top of the Depot building, in true Mountain Day spirit!



January 2025

Alums got together for a Winter Lunch in late January. They enjoyed catching up with each other and they were delighted to welcome two JYA students who had just arrived in the country for their semester at the University of Amsterdam.



### Upcoming Event!

**Date:** Monday, 5th May

**Time:** 11:30 – 14:00

**Location:** TBA in Utrecht

Spring Brunch

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## Norway – Nicole Rattè Guttormsen '91



### Mountain Day 2024

Mountain Day 2024 is announced a bit late in European time zones, but there was time for a quick hug and a selfie in front of the castle in downtown Oslo. Three alums met the following Monday for a wonderful tapas dinner to enjoy laughter, podcast and book shares, and an amazing basque cheesecake in lieu of ice cream!

This trio was joined by another alum on February 10th for a new evening of tapas and good company. Never a quiet moment around the table when the alums of Norway gather! Another one was meant to join the crew, but a stomach bug kept her from the fun. Next time our numbers will grow to five!!!





**December 2024**

Dinner and drinks in Oslo – with MHEAC Delegate Nisha Nilsson '91 from Sweden!

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## Sweden – Nisha Nilsson '91



**October 2024**

Four alums gathered at Cafe Kåkbrinken in Gamla Stan (Old Town) in Stockholm to celebrate Mountain Day. We engaged in an open and meaningful discussion about the upcoming American elections while we enjoyed matcha coffee and ice cream waffles.





## Upcoming Event!

**Date:** Spring 2025

**Time:** TBA

**Location:** TBA

Planning a fika (coffee/tea) or brunch with the current JYA student and a few alums.

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## Switzerland – Maya Mauroof '22



### Mountain Day 2024

Celebration in Switzerland with a brunch date with old and new students at the Geneva Graduate Institute.

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## Turkey – Zeynep Kurmus Hurbas '96



**November 2024**

Council delegate Zeynep Kurmus Hurbas '96 and visiting alum.



#### **December 2024**

Council delegate enjoyed meeting Global Alliance alums during a visit to Boston in the holiday season.

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In Memoriam





We are saddened to report the recent passing of Dutch alum **Patsy Anderson '65**, who died in early February after a long and gruesome fight with Alzheimer's disease. Patsy was a very active members of European and Dutch alum network. She attended the very first Symposium in London in 1987 and played a vital role in the organization of the Amsterdam Symposium in 1997. As long as her health allowed her to, she was a regular attendee at local alums events in the Netherlands and she is remembered as a strong and resilient member of our community.

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## Ongoing Virtual Events

# Join Us for Virtual M & Cs!



The well-established **Sunday evening virtual M&Cs** continue to be very popular with alums from all over the world. If you wish to connect and chat with other MHC alums from all generations please feel free to join every Sunday evening at 8:00 PM (CET) 7:00 (GMT) at <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/99698796120>.

The link to the sessions is also pinned in our [Mount Holyoke European Alum Facebook](#) group page each Sunday morning, together with a yummy cookie recipe, courtesy of Corinne Morgan '13.

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# Join Us for French!



## **Parlez-vous Français?**

Are you eager to practice your French and connect with Francophile alums from all over the world? Remember to join Méryem Puill-Châtillon '80 every other Thursday at 6:30 pm CET for an hour of French conversation and fun. This bi-monthly event is open to all levels.

Bienvenue à toutes!

Check the [MHEAC Facebook](#) or email [mhceurope@gmail.com](mailto:mhceurope@gmail.com) page for the date of the next meeting! À bientôt.

Zoom link: <https://mtholyoke.zoom.us/j/92564224779> - no code required!

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If you did not receive this newsletter as an email directly to your email box, and you want to keep up with the latest from the Mount Holyoke Alum Community of Europe...

[Sign up!](#)

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and our website: [Mount Holyoke European Alums](#).



*For more information, please contact the  
Mount Holyoke European Alum Council at:  
[mhceuropean@gmail.com](mailto:mhceuropean@gmail.com).*

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