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Mural facilitated by art education majors, created by children residing in safe housing, 2012. Photograph by Deborah Flanagan.

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# Editorial

Art education in some form or another has been a part of most people's lives. Whether as a child participating in art activities at schools, parks, and summer camps or as community members attending college courses or community events. That said, we at *Number*: have decided that this issue would focus on the dynamic field of art education in and around the South. In the next few pages, you will be presented with fascinating views and strategies that artists and educators are currently implementing. The amount of ways that someone can be taught and learn about art can probably vary just as much as the amount of ways that someone can create art itself. Art education is often loosely defined as the area of learning based upon the visual arts (including drawing, painting, sculpture, design, and everything else we write about at *Number*:). However, in this issue you will learn that art education takes on many forms, happens in many environments and is enriching our communities.

I think you will really enjoy reading about an extraordinary educational experience that takes place annually on Horn Island. In an interview, two Memphis College of Art participants share their perspectives on this unique learning environment. This extreme alternative education opportunity pretty much nailed down just how wondrous and fun art education can be. Within their separate, detailed stories, they seemed to have found a common thread of deeper understanding for nature and art while fully realizing separately that it's okay and important for people to come back from shared experiences with different results.

In the features and reviews you will find a focus on explaining just how certain policies, class structures, and solid examples of proper art education are striving to achieve the goal of utilizing art as a means to educate and enlighten people. They demonstrate how art is a tool used to create better individuals and societies. By going into detail about how art has the power to

enrich our lives, it is easy to come away with a renewed sense of hope that the art world is impacting the communities around us and moving them in the right direction. Similar to what Iryna Kurylo mentioned in her interview by saying "It made me open my mind and explore the world beyond what I know, and notice and appreciate simple things," I truly believe that the collection of writing found within this issue is taking our mission at *Number*: to another level.

Speaking of *Number*: taking things to another level, you should know that *Number*: is growing by leaps and bounds on the internet and social media fronts. If you'd like to be a part of this transition into bigger and better things feel free to "Like" us on Facebook and continue to share our publication with others. As we move to more timely online coverage of the arts to supplement our print edition, we will be looking for more writers, advertisers, and events that represent the region we cover. Without our readers and supporters who help to spread the word about *Number*:, our mission and efforts would be incomplete. If you have any questions about how you can help or feedback on how we can be even better, don't hesitate to write to us directly (info@numberinc.org). Thank you for your time and enjoy the issue at hand.



**Update:** The image reprinted here was included in No:72 with incomplete credit information. Willard Tucker was the artist of this work, presented as part of 10X10, a show curated by Zeitgeist and Coop (2012) in Chattanooga, TN.

Willard Tucker, *land tenure*, 2010, steel and cotton. Photograph by Casey Oshida.

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# Digital Storytelling: Combining Art, Literacy and Technology in the Classroom

Teaching art is not an easy task. The amount of time the students are in our classrooms seems to shrink each year, and the choices of new artworks and materials to teach with continue to grow. One skill I had to learn early on in teaching art was how to incorporate many skills and content areas into each lesson. Digital storytelling is one example of an art project that incorporates not only artistic skill but writing, speaking and technology, as well. Hopefully now you are asking yourself; what is a digital story and why would I want to teach it in an art class?

Digital storytelling is the practice of telling a story using computer-based tools (Dreon, Kerper, Landis, 2011; CDS). Digital stories are narrated stories that are usually short in length, ranging from two to ten minutes, that convey a specific idea or point of view of the author. Digital stories include still images or video combined with the voice of the author telling their story. Because the stories are extremely short the topic of the story needs to catch the attention of the audience quickly. Examples of digital stories from many writing genres can be found on the Internet. Bernard Robin (2006) categorizes digital stories into three main groups; personal narratives, stories that examine historical events, and stories that inform or instruct.

The *7 Elements of Storytelling* from the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) located in Berkeley, California is a good place to start thinking about what makes a digital story. The seven elements outlined by CDS are as follows:

- Point of view—the perspective of the author and the purpose of telling the story.
- A dramatic question—the essential question that will keep the audience’s attention to hear the answer at the end.
- Emotional content—serious or powerful topics that connect to the audience emotionally.
- The gift of your voice—personalizing the story to bring the audience to your context.
- The power of the soundtrack—adding background music or sound effects to enhance the story.
- Economy—careful selection of words and content to provide only enough detail to tell a cohesive story.
- Pacing—how fast or slow the story unfolds.

The tools used to create a digital story can be as simple as a mobile device that has the capability to capture images, record your voice and combine the elements with a downloadable application. Several mobile applications are available for free or purchase that can import images, record audio and combine all elements for the final digital story. Or, more complex digital stories can be generated using digital cameras with tripods, digital audio recorders and a movie-making program, such as iMovie to create the final product. Many resources are available online with examples of digital stories created by authors of all ages as well as tutorials and links to applications needed to use the

technology and actually create a digital story.

Why would I want to teach digital storytelling in an art class? One of the demands made on me as a teacher was to document how I incorporated literacy into my art lessons. Digital stories require students to use artistic skills in drawing, photography, composition, and video production. Literacy skills are incorporated in the digital story project through writing the script for an effective, engaging short story. Research can be required if the digital story is about a person, historic object, or world event. Oral communication skills are practiced as the student author’s voice is recorded for the story. Besides using multiple skill sets to create a digital story, storytelling gives students a chance to express their point of view in the classroom. Learners, whether they are children or adults, are empowered by creating a story with a message they want to convey (Kervin, Mantei, 2011). It can be informational, personal, political, historical, persuasive or passionate. Allowing students to have a space for expression that is both visual and verbal is providing them an opportunity to listen and to be heard.

Digital storytelling assignments can be open or defined depending on the desired outcome. Instructors may limit students to creating a story about an assigned concept or topic, or let students determine the direction their story will take as long as it contains the basic elements of a digital story. Connecting the story topic to student’s lives in the school or community is a way to make the assignment relevant and increase student’s motivation to produce a high quality finished product. Assigning a theme or big idea, such as power, peace, relationships, environmentalism, culture, acceptance, tolerance, or freedom can offer a direction for students to begin the story while leaving room for many interpretations within the classroom. Completed story projects can be shared in a class film celebration or presentation day. Digital stories can be stored and shared through the Internet on social media and video sites.

There are several steps needed to plan to teach digital storytelling. These steps can be used for elementary students through higher education as the basis for the project. The age and ability level of the students in your class will determine the complexity of the final project and assessment. To begin a digital story students will need to perform the following tasks:

- Select the topic for the story.
- Create a storyboard or plan for the story — what will the viewer see in connection with the dialog of the story? Use sketching and writing to plan how the story will look and progress.
- Write the script for the story.
- Determine locations for shooting images and video, make any props or costumes if necessary.

- Shoot the photos and videos needed for the images of the story.
- Record the script using a digital recording program.
- Use a movie making program or mobile application that will combine the images and audio.
- Add background music or sound effects.
- Refine the overall quality of the digital story—adjustments to photos and videos length and quality, timing of images with narrative, volume of narrative and sound effects.

The *7 Elements of Digital Storytelling* (CDS) is not only a good place to begin planning a digital story but also useful to assess completed stories. Use the elements as a guide and determine how effectively the artist presented each element in their digital story. Some questions you could ask in an assessment include, does the story catch and hold my attention? Are the visual images consistent and do they support the narrative? Is the narration clear and the volume balanced with the sound effects? Do the sound effects detract from following the story?

Students growing up in an increasingly technological world can be engaged in the classroom by learning how to be creators of digital media. Digital storytelling provides an outlet for artists to create and disseminate their work through social media sources. As instructors of the visual arts we create spaces for students to use imagery to express themselves. Digital storytelling allows students to combine both audio and visual media to tell a story from their point of view. Implementing lessons that include paper and pencil artistic skills, technology, and literacy provide opportunities for multiple learning styles and student interests to intersect. Students are motivated to learn when they are producing work about things they care about in the world, utilize contemporary technologies, and see their artwork go beyond the teacher’s desk when it is shared with peers.

**Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS).** (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.storycenter.org>

**Dreon, O., Kerper, R., & Landis, J. (2011).** Digital storytelling: A tool for teaching and learning in the YouTube generation. *Middle School Journal, 42*(5), 4-10.

**Kervin, L. & Mantei, J. (2011).** THIS IS ME: Children teaching us about themselves through digital storytelling. *Practically Primary, 16*(1), 4-7.

**Robin, B. (2006).** The educational uses of digital storytelling. In C. Crawford et al. (Eds.), *Proceedings of Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference 2006* (pp.709-716). Chesapeake, VA: AACE

**Dr. Tollefson-Hall** is Art Education Graduate Program Director and Assistant Professor of Art Education at James Madison University.

# Native Voices: Building Multicultural Curriculum from North American Heritage

As art educators we are composers. We orchestrate the understanding of history, media, and methods in our visual art classes with our own understandings of what we ourselves have been taught, what we have discovered in our past explorations, and the inspirations of our current ideas. So often when we teach about art history with our lessons, we focus on the knowledge of popular and art historically driven works that fit into the traditional framework of art historical contexts or a form of multiculturalism that extends beyond the borders of the United States, and we often forget that we have hidden treasures in own backyard. The southeast region is filled with a heritage we rarely address and yet has had such a profound impact on our history. It is the history of the Native American. It is the visual voices of those past and present that have the potential to bring us new ways of seeing what we teach and how we teach in visual art.

We have been living amongst and with the recorded memories of Native Americans since the first settlers stepped onto the soil of what we now call the United States of America. Their history is broad and vast and encompasses a diversity all its own, in and amongst the different tribes that have been living here for centuries. These cultures have persevered in spite of oppressive government and educational policies, stereotypes, and stigmas throughout the ages. The creatives in these cultures (aka. artists) have left us a legacy from which to draw upon for multicultural inspiration, some of which is found in the J. W. Wiggins Native American collection housed at the Sequoyah National Research Center on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. It is home to over 2300 works of art representing Meso-America to the Canadian Artic and has a small gallery open to the public. It is from this collection that one professor and three graduate students, all in-service teachers, began to develop a multicultural curriculum to explore our Native American heritage through the works of contemporary Native American artists.

We came to know and explore the works as a result of a project called the Research Roundtable and working with Dr. James Parins at the Sequoyah National Research Center. In exploring the collection various works stood out such as the works of Daphne Odjig, Benjamin Harjo, Jr., Ronald Anderson, Marlene Mameah, and many others from the various tribes and

nations that inhabit North America who speak visually about their culture and heritage. These artworks and voices offer us the unique opportunity to share and teach our students about the uniqueness of Native people and cultures that are here among us and to help keep their voices alive in today’s dominant cultures. In an effort to share some of the J.W. Wiggins Collection we developed a series of multicultural lessons that are currently available using multicultural curriculum and art history.

Why do we believe you should teach about Native American art in your classroom? It is really a matter of revisiting something we already know, but do not often take the time to prepare or talk about in our classrooms, we teach about other cultures to inspire our students, and ourselves. We often have trouble successfully organizing and blending art history and multicultural curriculum that inspires and reveals a new point of view. Our hope in sharing what we have done is to give you a framework for doing just that. As educators in the broad sense and visual art teachers specifically, one of the best gifts given by a distinct multicultural curriculum can be summed up in a single word: context. It is the rich contextual possibilities offered by multicultural art education that are emphasized as the backbone of the lessons presented here as one example of what we developed at the Sequoyah National Research Center. Context, as every teacher knows, is the glue that holds seemingly disparate concepts together in a learner’s mind and makes learning possible. In designing this unit, we have discovered how well learning culture can provide context for learning art and how learning art can do the same for learning culture. Connections are revealed that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. By pairing the two, the context they provide one another enriches the learning experience and, we believe, enhances retention and comprehension which make it possible for learners to subsequently think their way up Bloom’s Taxonomy. Here is the one of our favorite lessons centered around Daphne Odjig, a contemporary Potawatomi artist (one of a series developed and available to educators at the SNRC), that demonstrates our art historical multicultural approach to building curriculum centered on Native Americans, but can be applied to designing any curriculum focusing on other cultures. With this in mind, we designed and

developed each lesson to make connections between:

- A contemporary Native-American artist
- This artist’s culture
- Typical examples from the artist’s body of work
- A featured element of art and/or principle of design
- Art criticism done by the learner
- Studio art production done by the learner

How is the lesson used in real time? Before discussing Mrs. Odjig, show your students a reproduction of her 2001 serigraph, *And Some Watched the Sunset*. Lead the class to discover the work for themselves by walking them through the four steps of art criticism. Have them name all the things they see in the picture (description). Talk about its visual design with words like “cool colors” and “curvy lines.” Discuss what they think is happening or how the picture “feels.” Students usually mention things about nature or family, especially when looking at her other works (interpretation). Finally, have students give opinions on why they do or do not like aspects of the picture (judgment). From there go on to discuss Daphne Odjig, herself. Tell the students about her Potawatomi culture, including pointing out the Great Lakes region of Canada where the Potawatomi are now based, and you could read them a quote by her. By now, hopefully you have connected an art work they are invested in to a real human being, and she, in turn, puts a face on her culture, making the Potawatomi more than just an abstract name of some people in a book. Next, introduce the featured element of art or principle of design, in this case, organic and geometric shape and movement. After quickly defining the terms, have the students point out examples of them in *And Some Watched the Sunset* and other similarly representative pieces of Odjig’s body of work. Finally, move on to the studio activity, in which students create a collage using organic shapes and movement in a scene that relates to their own families or environments. In the attempt to make meaningful contexts in each lesson, sequence is key.

We believe that through using a multicultural approach to art making and thinking with cultures that are relevant to our own histories past and present in North America, it will raise questions and cause our students to see things in new ways and become familiar with a people and culture that has and does still reside among us.

## North Little Rock, Arkansas Regional Update

**Art Connection** is a new addition to the vibrant arts community in the **Argenta Arts District** of North Little Rock, Arkansas. This exciting new non-profit is an after-school and summer visual arts program for underserved North Little Rock High School students. Its mission is to provide a path for these youth to achieve higher education, citizen leadership and self-sufficiency through paid employment in the creative economy.

Art Connection provides meaningful employment and training in the visual arts industry along with one-on-one mentoring with professional artists and academic tutoring to improve their grades. The students will receive training in such areas as painting, graphic design, and web design. They are paid a minimum wage and have the opportunity to sell their art to then receive a percentage of the sales. The program plans to partner with schools, colleges, local artists, the City of North Little Rock, other arts organizations such as the **Thea Foundation** and the **Argenta Arts Foundation**, and local business professionals to design, market, and sell customized products and services. These partnerships will create unlimited opportunities for creative collaboration and potential projects across the community.

Art Connection believes that all individuals possess creativity so there is no requirement for applicants to be artistic. It provides a safe learning environment where creativity is nurtured and the teens have the opportunity and freedom to explore their talents. The focus is on the key areas of respect, responsibility and positive relationships.

Located at 204 East 4th Street, North Little Rock, the recently renovated building serves as office, studio and gallery space for the program. The doors opened on August 17, 2012, and the program officially started with 20 students on September 13, 2012. The youth staff commenced their training in the painting studio where they receive mentoring from local artists. They work on individual pieces to develop their portfolio as well as group projects, such as creating a community mural. The mural project will allow them to explore their creativity and put their positive stamp on society. Seeing their art on public display will sow the seeds of self-worth as they begin this awesome discovery of endless possibilities!

In the future, Art Connection hopes to expand with studios in drawing, photography, film & video production, fashion design, screen printing, jewelry design and sculpture. It will be awe-inspiring to witness the progress of this program as they develop leaders and create innovators. Embraced by a well-established arts district, alive with artistic endeavors, Art Connection provides a powerful platform for youth to express their individuality and add to that collective creative voice.

For more information, please email Pammi Fabert, Director of Art Connection, at [pfabert@argentaartconnection.org](mailto:pfabert@argentaartconnection.org).

**Pammi Fabert is passionate about art, the arts, the creative process, youth, and experiencing the ways in which art transforms lives.**



Art Connection Building in Argenta Arts District, 2012. Photo courtesy of Larry Pennington, Pennington Studios.

## Nashville Regional Update

With autumn's back-to-school schedule in full swing, Nashville's hitting the books and preparing for a wide variety of educational opportunities throughout the area.

Speaking of books, Nashville's national hit success, the **Handmade and Bound** festival, returned for a second year of showcasing independent publishing, zine culture, and artist's books this October. In addition to workshops, demonstrations, and a gallery of book-related artworks from around the globe, HMB also paired with **Watkins College of Art, Design, and Film** to create a public art sculpture from books; bringing the public into the art-making process during the day-long opening event. Vendors, comic distributors, and local presses were on site to inform visitors of the vibrant book culture here in the South.

For those that like their educational opportunities to be hands-on, the end of September brought the **Circuit Benders Ball** back to Nashville. A celebration of all things electronically remixed — from digital image and video play, to musical performances, to the physicalities of altering children's electronic toys into playable instruments — the third appearance of the CBB was in its second year in Nashville after a successful transplant from Columbus, Ohio, in 2011. CBBN opened with daytime workshops teaching the art of creatively recycling electronics, hosted a gallery of altered arts and objects influenced by digital processes, and rounded out with evening performances of ambient soundscapes, aleatoric noise, and EDM-influenced grooves from both local sounds and special guest appearances from out-of-state.

CBBN was one of many events being held at the **Brick Factory Nashville**, a collaborative work — and learning — space hailing itself as a gym for artists and quickly proving to be a new hot spot for art activities. Since opening in February 2012, Brick Factory has held classes on everything from art-making techniques to DIY skill sets as they pair with **The Skillery** (an online marketplace serving Nashville by connecting experts and students). Brick Factory also serves as a launching pad for a woodshop, co-working art areas, flexible classrooms, a photography cyc wall, and works with other organizations such as the Nashville chapter of **Research Club** (where participants present on their fields of study to other curious minds in hope of jumpstarting exchanges and fine-tuning progress) - to provide meeting space to those who foster a similar love for learning.

And it seems that getting together to share lessons and plan directions is the new Nashville. Spontaneous groupings have established themselves to be the norm. Meeting regularly, groups like the **Creative Meetup**, are getting together to discuss trends and propose ideas in the arts community, and we're seeing the effects of that perfect attendance spread. At the top of it all, The Frist Center, Nashville Scene/Country Life blog, and Metro Arts hosted **Nash-Up**, a free day symposium of panels, discussions, and roundtables remixing the direction of Nashville's creative future. It was one more extraordinary addition on the list of Artober events that dedicated October to a citywide creative address.

With an A for effort and high marks in motivation, Nashville's the perfect campus for creative change this fall.

**M Kelley is a maker, thinker, and do-er based in Nashville, TN.**

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## Mississippi Regional Update

Though small towns might not have the framework to sustain permanent art exhibits in the form of successful museums, one small town in Mississippi is still engaging its community in the creative sector of the South. With the railroad running through its historic downtown, **Brookhaven, Mississippi** is continuing to strengthen its center and reconstruct its foundational urban core.

The most recent addition in the revitalization of Brookhaven's downtown is **The Inn on Whitworth**. Built as the Cohn Brotheris Mercantile store in the 1800's, The Inn on Whitworth still contains its original antique hardwood floors, fourteen-foot ceilings, and walk in vault; however, this boutique hotel is more than just a renovated historic building.

Under the artistic direction of Kim Sessums, The Inn on Whitworth developed the motto "Where Art and Architecture Meet Southern Hospitality" — the art portion of this sentence being extremely evident from the moment one walks through the full front, glass-paneled doors. Sessums, a local artist and twenty year resident of Brookhaven, viewed the project as a challenge, but also as an opportunity to create something that enhanced a small community and was of benefit to the downtown efforts to remain a vibrant attractive center for the town.

Not only is The Inn on Whitworth adding to the attractiveness of the town's center, but it is also contributing to the creative community of south Mississippi and to the region as a whole. The Inn, though not your normal art gallery or museum, serves as a venue for the exhibition of local artists' work and unique talent.

According to Sessums, "The idea was and has been (for artists) to be willing to install for an indefinite period of time works of art created by hand that would be owned by the artists but on loan for exhibition within The Inn. A rotation of art is plausible at some point allowing various quality works of art a venue to be seen and experienced by the public."

Because The Inn not only rotates pieces of art, but also traveling groups of people, the exhibition is visible to a wide array of travelers passing through Brookhaven. Sessums said, "The works are tastefully and well presented and enjoyed by a variety of people and personalities who might not ordinarily visit an art gallery or museum."

While The Inn is successfully attaining its goal of providing downtown Brookhaven with a unique lodging environment, it is also providing the community with an unusual, one-of-a-kind experience for viewing art.

But The Inn on Whitworth does not exist solely for the benefit of Brookhaven. In fact, Sessums and investors of The Inn hope that it can be a stimulus for other small communities to think and act outside the box — outside of what everybody else is doing with buildings in their communities. According to Sessums, "Our hope is that this endeavor can, and will, encourage other creative spirits to invigorate and improve their own community architecture and atmosphere by taking bold steps to recreate new and unique spaces while respecting the architectural heritage in the area."

**Betsy Lynch, a graduate of the University of Mississippi, lives in Washington, DC and works for the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.**



## Laurel, MS Regional update

Tucked away in a historic residential area of the small town of **Laurel, Mississippi** is a gem of the Mississippi art world. The **Lauren Rogers Museum of Art** which opened in 1923 boasts a collection of 19th and 20th century American and European work that would be the envy of much larger museums in major cities. In addition to that they have notable collections of Japanese woodblock prints, British Georgian Silver, and Native American baskets.

The Lauren Rogers Museum of Art recently held a juried exhibition for Mississippi Art Faculty in their Lower Level Galleries for temporary exhibitions. This was the third time to hold this particular juried exhibition with the last one occurring in 2009. Tommie Rodgers, registrar of the museum, said that they recognized after a successful show of work by college students that there was no venue for art faculty to regularly exhibit. Deciding that art faculty of Mississippi's schools of higher learning should be celebrated, the inaugural exhibition took place in 2005. They also realized that this would be a great opportunity for interaction between the schools. And the faculty are responding. Participation grew from 30 in 2009, to 51 in 2012, with 13 schools represented.

George Bassi, the museum's director, says that what is special about this particular exhibition was that viewer and patron were able to get a sense of what was being taught in these schools. He emphasized the great eclectic mix of styles and mediums exhibited. This is true; there was a broad range of work including painting, sculpture, video, photography, ceramics, and mixed media.

The museum is maintaining a certain prestige with who they are asking to jury the exhibitions. In 2005, they had Erin Barnett, Assistant Curator of Collections at the International Center of Photography in New York City. In 2009 it was Joseph W. Lampo, Deputy Director of Programs at the Arkansas Arts Center, and in 2012, Miranda Lash, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the New Orleans Museum of Art.

"The works presented demonstrate a range in subject matter between artists whose work reflects a strong sense of place and an interest in the specific culture of the South, and artists whose primary inspiration either comes from within or from more generalized observations" said Ms. Lash. "All the works presented here are worthy of close looking and praise. However, I would like to applaud a few particular sparks of originality that caught my eye: the composition of Chung-Fan Chang's oil and acrylic paintings, the evocative environments of Mark Geil's photographs, the texture and statements made in Ky Johnston's stoneware, the surreal, melancholic feeling in Dominic Lippillo's photographs, the detailed imagery in Soon E. Ngoh's etchings, and the layered leafy colors in Carlyle Wolfe's monotypes."

Though it has had a remarkably successful past, the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art isn't resting on its laurels. They are currently in the middle of a \$2.5 million expansion adding 5,400 sq.ft. to the museum, 3,400 sq. ft. of which will be gallery space. The new space will allow them to exhibit more of their permanent collection most of which is contemporary art, and also will allow them to grow their collection. The addition is scheduled to open in March 2013, for the museum's 90th anniversary, and the next installment of the Mississippi Art Faculty Juried Exhibition is scheduled for 2015.

**Jerrold Partridge is a full time artist and drawing instructor living and working in Jackson, MS.**



Installation view, April 2012. Courtesy Lauren Rogers Museum of Art.

# The Education of Art

We today locate ourselves in the position to translate the abstract, discipline-shattering breakthroughs within the ivory towers into lucid educational policies. Collaborative dispositions and methods fundamentally define this position, which is distinguished less as an unprecedented ability than as a necessity unique to our historical moment. Vitally, our macroscopic models of art theory and practice are shifting; so too, educators, advocates, lobbyists, and policy makers alike must reexamine local and regional educational policies in light of shifts toward the inter- or trans-disciplinary. In the coming years, a broad range of like-minded, experimental thinkers will revolutionize pedagogical definitions of art, and thereby concretize, relative to present privations, its possibilities for positive individual and societal change.

A call to *cherchez le potentiel* then, I argue that, in discussing the visual arts' role in educational policy and attendant public funding, conceptions of art must be democratically challenged, reexamined, and reconfigured in both instrumental and non-instrumental terms. In other words, we need to form independent, nonpartisan, interdisciplinary, and intercollegiate coalitions on local and regional levels to identify specific social and cultural indignities; formulate clear, responsive policy recommendations; and suggest unambiguous routes of implementation. Significantly, this approach must emphasize both the practical, socio-economic values of the arts and art objects (e.g., as sources of job creation, skill development, and as salable luxury objects specific to local markets) as well as their autonomous, aesthetic value (e.g., as intrinsic to human being and expression, as pure objects of beauty, or as sites of disinterested contemplation). Moreover, such an endeavor would necessarily deemphasize (but not necessarily dismantle) the distinctions between art and design, as well as those between educator and pupil.

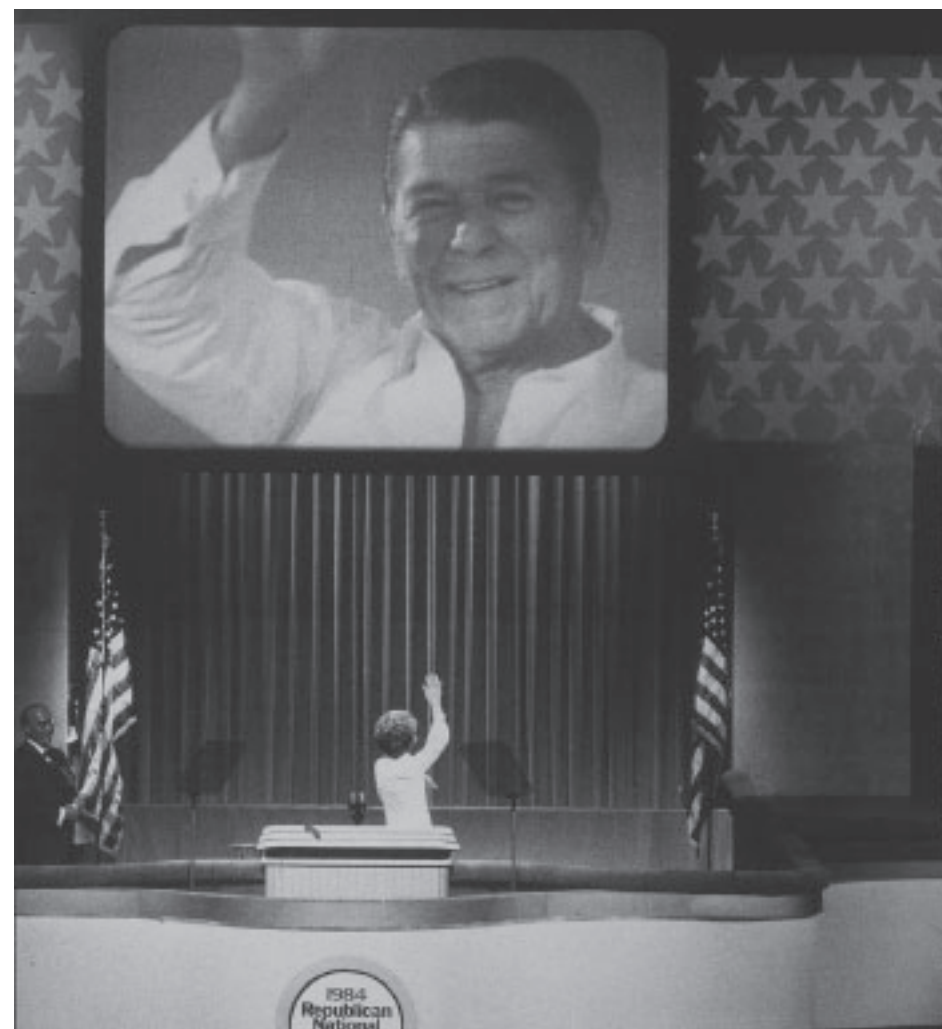
Calling attention to the well-known June, 1869 petition to the Massachusetts State Legislature, which led to the first mandated public drawing education in the United States, demonstrates this strategy's availability as apposite to contemporary issues. Specificity, justification, and organization rendered this petition innovative. Its authors—twelve individuals and two businesses—identified particular socio-economic needs, namely the scarcity of able American draftsmen and the stress this lack placed on the textile industry in national and regional contexts. They suggested the simple, clear-cut fix of offering free drawing classes in public schools. The diverse group of notable businessmen and Massachusetts' elite evidenced broad support, deployed considerable social capital, and honed a remarkably strategic argument precisely appropriate for the particular conditions of their regional milieu. We learn from this example that, on one hand, educators and lobbyists for public art

education must deploy targeted, clear language in order to appeal to elected officials who are as uninformed about effective art education as they are encumbered by various legislative affairs. On the other hand, as the petitioners' success was contingent upon the blending of strategic thinking with elite social capital, we should hold fast to the importance of developing such broad (and sustainable) networks.

Presently, this strategy is widely applicable on state, regional, and national orders of magnitude. In order to adopt it, a shift in identity corresponding to shifting socio-cultural conditions must take place. If the goal is to implement policy that utilizes art as a means to educate for the ends of better persons, citizens, societies, and economies, then educators, academics, lobbyists, and others must amend their self-perceptions. No longer afforded the luxury of neatly delineated fields of discourse, yet pressured to articulate complex goals and ideals in evermore specialized, precise terminology, those who today seek to impact and create educational policy must wear many hats and speak many tongues. Such polyglots of pedagogy and policy must take the lead in developing networks that nurture even more efficacious future exponents.

Cross-training of this scale demands coalitions across town, county, and state borders. Effectively, this serves as a call to arms for public and private universities, among other significant educational institutions and organizations. Quantitative US Census Data shows some 626,000 students enrolled in nearly 200 institutions within the Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi tri-state area, in addition to over four million students enrolled in bordering states. The salient problem is how to identify and connect individuals within this population who are able and willing to contribute to grassroots, microcosmic discourses. The priority should be creating cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional bodies that are inherently cost-effi-

cient, encourage competition among students, and put students' energy and experimental thinking to use. Think tanks, local or sub-regional academic conferences and associations, and enhanced internship possibilities would not only prove equitable investments in future generations, but would provide the present generation of educators and policy makers a crucial link between the developments in the maelstroms of disinterested academia and the practical requirements of human living in this century. Further, within and without the individual university, we must encourage students' abilities to integrate their theses into innovative, collaborative projects that engage socio-cultural and intellectual privations. Obviously, this model should nod to the insights of technological advancements and the humanities alike, but with an important qualification in regard to the former. In short, rather than place Smart Boards, tablets and other new gadgets in every classroom, we need to take advantage of communications technologies insofar as they create opportunities for face to face human interaction, and thereby develop and articulate specific strategies of communicative action (Vis à vis technology and education, futurists argue for the imminent obsolescence of educators given the prevalence of free, open source course material, as if the point of teaching were the communication of discreet facts assembled in neat .pdf packets.).



Paul Hoferos, *Video with Nancy Reagan at Republican National Convention, Dallas, 1984.*  
Data source: University of California, San Diego.

While the priority should rest in building this sort of micro-politics, preventing them from becoming atomistic is a concomitant concern. As art lovers, we are all too aware of the importance of composition; to locate the place of the particular within the ordered whole. So the hackneyed mantra, "Think global, act local," holds true in this context; tout ensemble, the micro-dialogues of the previous paragraph must be cognizant of and connected to extant national and global discourses. To the relief of traditionalists then, pragmatic expressions of the tensions within academia do not entail a dismantling of the traditional

institutional order, but are merely augmentative, if not supplementary.

Acknowledging the precedence of specificity, justification, and organization by creating more local and regional communities of kindred spirits is a crucial first step. Indeed, the first step has commenced: as students seek more productive means to express their fundamental anxieties about national and global crises than merely occupying city squares, states' mass exodus from No Child Left Behind underscores the priority of local solutions over arbitrary federal mandates. The subsequent uncertainty left in the

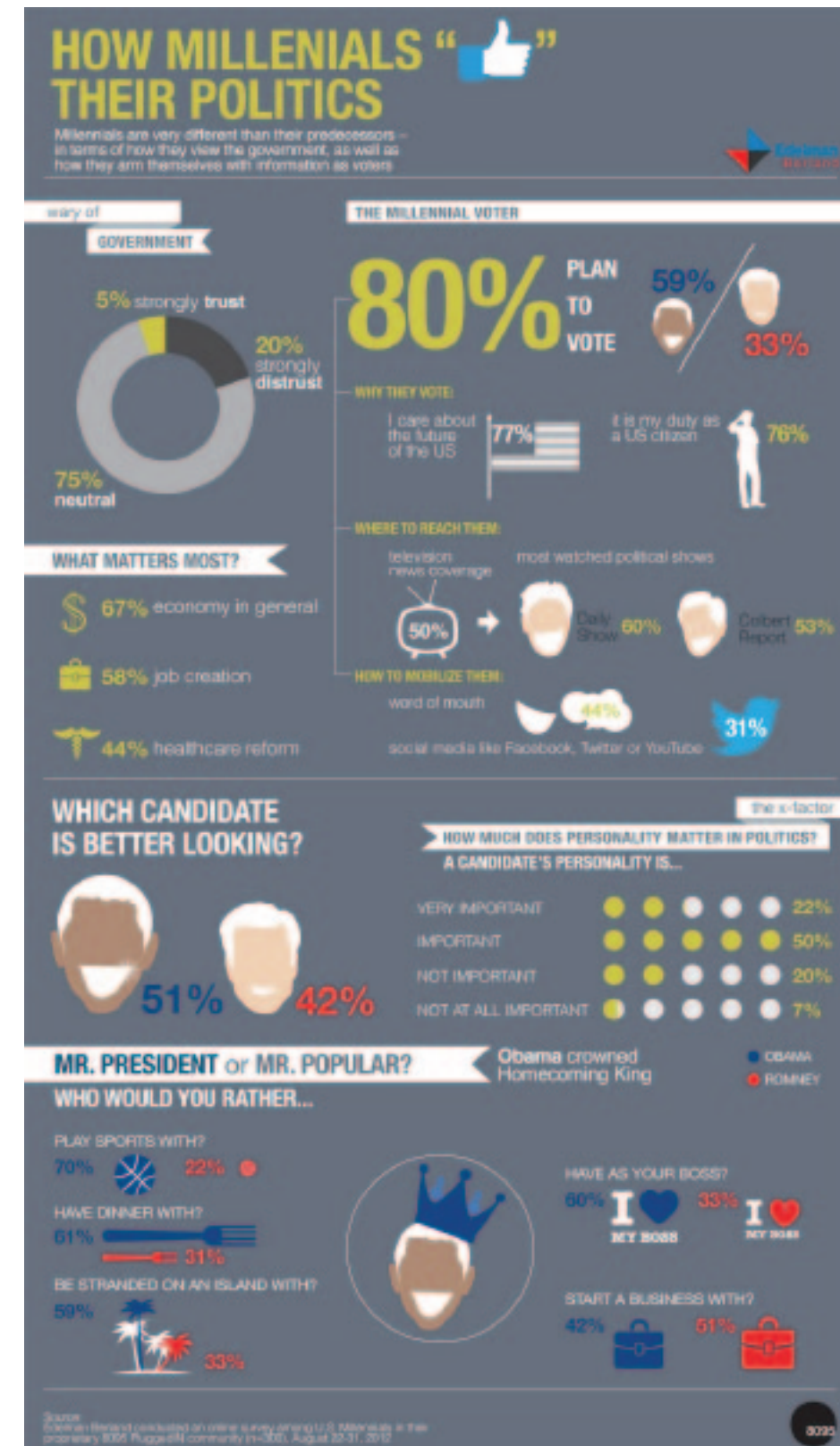
wake of those state waivers creates precisely those conditions favorable for innovative thinking—precisely the climate in which to implement our solutions in ways that transcend political and institutional ideologies. In the logic of the 5th Century philosopher St. Augustine of Hippo, fear in the face of uncertainty is the condition for hope.

It was fear, after all, that this past August moved journalists the nation over to page through their copies of Joan Didion's prescient 1988 essay, *Insider Baseball*. As they do every four years, politicos and talking heads slouch toward whichever cities happen to host the Democratic and Republican National Conventions in trepidation of another round of false promises and empty platitudes. Those who somehow manage to remain afloat despite the simulacral deluge of presidential politics tote Didion's disenchanted account of the specialized mechanisms that fetishize means over ends in national campaigns. Yet her handling of the 1988 campaign seems just short of old-fashioned in

2012; the post-Citizen's United political climate renders benign her narrative of the process machining for its own sake, and in place of her cynicism we suffer the faux initiations of mass emails and online petitions on the one hand, and on the other, the terrible notion that the real *insiders* are even less apt to lead than we outsiders.

To inject here the idealism that a thorough art education is the panacea for our political and social troubles would be of course a great naiveté. Sobered by this caveat, we must imagine a pragmatic response to the priority of the visual in our electoral lives: how do we foster, on a mass scale, the critical abilities to dissect not only the ubiquitous partisan political ads most people simply tend to ignore, but the increasingly numerous infographics and data visualizations that relay complex information at a single glance? As data are created and disseminated in quantities that exceed the brain's communicative capacities—thus the phenomenon dubbed "Big Data"—information is in turn efficiently represented through graphical means. A new visual literacy thus joins those mechanisms in place whereby we navigate parades of images, plucking here and there those we reckon suitable to fit into our constructed selves.

Renewed interrogation of the place of the visual arts in education (and therefore in citizenship) is therefore a predictable event. But to prevent the predictability of a historical necessity from degrading into the banality of redeployed failed methods better left to history's graveyard, we must follow a particular course of action, namely the one outlined above in broad strokes. We must examine prior models of policy intervention, such as the 1869 petition, and extrapolate tactics applicable today. Independently forming regional, non-partisan, intercollegiate coalitions, think tanks, non-profit organizations, and other communities will adapt these tactics, honing them for contemporary use. Decentralizing the work by involving students lowers expenses, enlivens the discourse, and provides hands-on training for a new, more efficacious generation. Finally, after the labors of attending to local and regional specificity, rigorous justification of proposals, and a robust organizational structure, we might establish a common language bridging the gaps between educators and policy makers. Accentuating, *prima facie*, the role of an instrumentalized visuality in the service of political and economic ends, thereby attaining the support of a wide variety of figures in civics and in business, we—art lovers, academics, educators, and others—shall revel, perhaps a bit surreptitiously, in the substantive achievement that lies just below the rational surface of that cold practicality: that we could finally convince *insiders* of the fundamentality of the aesthetic process and object to being human, and thus secure their place in federal and state budgets.



Designed by Nicole Rusenko, published by Edelman Berland. *How Millennials 'Like' Their Politics.*  
Source: <http://visual.ly/how-millennials-like-their-politics>

Jared Butler is a Master's candidate in Art History at the Savannah College of Art and Design.

# Interview: Don DuMont & Iryna Kurylo

## An Insider's and Outsider's Perspective of Horn Island

I am Iryna Kurylo, a junior at Memphis College of Art majoring in Illustration. I grew up in Kyiv, Ukraine and moved to Memphis to pursue my dream of becoming an artist when MCA offered me a scholarship. I found out about the Horn Island program during my first semester, and though I was not able to go right away, it sparked my interest from the very beginning. Two years later, in May of this year, I was fortunate to be a part of this adventurous and inspiring endeavor. In the following interview, I would like to share about my experience of this trip as well as art educational aspects of it. For the overview of the program and its story, I will start with a brief interview with Don DuMont, professor at Memphis College of Art and director of the Horn Island program.

### **Kurylo: What is the Horn Island program about?**

DuMont: The program was started by MCA Professor Bob Riseling in 1985 and he was the director for the first 20 years — as he envisioned it — to get students out of the comforts of a studio classroom, engage them in a natural setting that would challenge them to new perspectives. This is still at the core today — students are required to keep a journal/log sketchbook with daily entries of their personal experience. They also participate in all of the logistics of the trip—pre and post trip preparation of equipment, loading out stores, setting up main camp, island duties. They are involved with every aspect of what it takes for a large group to survive nine days on an island with no amenities so there is a lot of team work that takes place. Horn Island is designated as a Federal Wilderness Reserve and is approximately 14 miles long and about ¾ mile wide. It is one of the barrier islands in the Gulf Island National Seashore system and lays approximately 14 miles off the Mississippi coast in the Gulf of Mexico. Students are on their own to explore the islands offerings that include hundreds of species of birds, rich marine life, and other flora and fauna of the region. Prior to leaving for the island, students research the American artist Walter Inglis Anderson and visit the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs, MS.

Horn Island was a refuge for Walter Anderson and became a wealth of resources for his painting, sculpture, and writings. So now students are some what retracing Walters footsteps on the island. The encounters students have with the island and trip are developed into a body of work. The work is submitted and juried. Students then participate with the installation of the annual Horn Island exhibition that begins at the start of the fall semester.

### **How has the program and student work evolved?**

The HI program just concluded the 28th year. When Bob started the trip he had no idea it would take, let alone make the next year. By the second year, after

reviewing student sketchbooks he knew that the work should be shared; a small selection of HI student work was displayed in the Brodie Gallery at MCA. From the start, the exhibition was well received. Today the exhibition occupies all three galleries at Rust Hall and continues to be one of the better exhibitions of the year. This of course evolved over some years and if not for the persistence of Bob and the support of the MCA community the program would not have developed into what it is now. The program is offered during the first summer session where students can register for one or three studio credits — they may also audit. The program puts emphasis on research, creativity, exploration and discovery. Students are required to give up their cell phones and mobile devices for nine days. I believe one must disconnect in order to reconnect — that is what the island can provide, the chance to get away from routine daily distractions — to look inward as well as outward, to focus on ones surroundings. While on the island students engage with other members of the group, which include alumni, faculty, and local supporters, exchange ideas, participate in island traditions that may be the catalyst for their creativity. Artwork developed for the exhibition use traditional and non-traditional methods from all disciplines — drawing, painting, sculpture, illustration, ceramics, metals, photography, printmaking and digital media. In the development of the exhibition work, students discuss options on methods and the importance of presenting their work in a professional manner. All of which falls in place with our Professional Practices mission at MCA.

### **While on the island, you read to the group every evening before dinner ... why?**



Main camp sotdae assignment installation, May 2012. Photo courtesy of Iryna Kurylo.

I read excerpts from the Walter Anderson Horn Island Logs. Walter died in 1965, and all of the readings are from his last trip out to the island of that year and correspond to the days of our trip. It's a way to pay a little homage and it is also interesting that sometimes the readings sync to what happens during the day. For instance, *"I had coffee then walked west on the beach to meet a black squall (purple), coming from the west, bringing a shower of rain."* WA — and we may look up to the west and see a large purple rain cloud forming. The works of Walter Anderson — paintings, sculpture, pottery, writings, poems, and his recordings as a naturalist are of great influence to all of us.

### **I know what my first experience was like ... what was yours like?**

Iryna, it may have been a bit different than yours, as I was in my 40s before making the trip, Bob had been after me for years to go on the HI trip. Up until that time, I felt like I couldn't justify a trip as unusual as this — time away from the studio and client responsibility. Then day two of the first trip something happened, I like to call it the magic hour — it's hard to explain but a transformation took place. I felt recharged and from that point on, approached my personal work and that of client work differently. Now I don't have the freedom and time to move around the island as in the past, but the transformation still takes place. When I talk with students and witness this happening with them, then see all the creativity take place, review the journal/sketchbooks and see what is developed into an exhibition; well, this is very rewarding to me. Now, what about your Horn Island experience?

### **Kurylo: Stepping out of the boat that transported us to the island felt like stepping inside the**

artwork from preceding Horn Island shows. This destination, long imagined and dreamed about, was finally reached. Needless to say, all of us were really excited.

This was my first experience of the Gulf Shores. Most of the flora and fauna of this region were completely foreign to me, so I discovered a whole new world for myself on Horn Island. The beauty of this place exceeded my expectations. The elegance of the pine trees, the soft texture of the white dunes against the bright sky, the yellow-greens of palmettos and rosemary bushes, white drops of morning glories, shells and driftwood with all possible textures of incredible intricacy and wildlife everywhere, visible all around us and yet most of the time unnoticed. Numerous animals, birds, and marine creatures living side-by-side with us who let us share their space.

What shocked me was the amount of random objects and trash washed onto the island by the ocean. Apart from glass and metal cans and numerous plastic bottles, there were helmets, light bulbs, toys, clothes, folding chairs, lots of rope, pieces of boats, garbage containers. Once, we even came across a school desk! When I saw that with my own eyes, it really dawned on me how much of the stuff that we throw away accumulates in the global ocean and how many beautiful places of nature around the world our waste is continuously ruining. What I did not realize was that all the found objects that we had collected and used to complete our island assignments would be bagged and taken to the main land as trash at the end of the trip. Thus, while engaged in educational projects, we were cleaning the island at the same time.

Being on the island was an amazing time of discovery and exploration, as well as a transformation process. At first, I experienced something similar to a culture shock. Being out of my comfort zone in an unusual new environment, sometimes fearful and unsure of the island

inhabitants' reaction to my intrusion, I needed to get used to the ways of the island and my island routines. There were some practical aspects like walking on the sand, sleeping outside on hard ground, being constantly hot and having sand all over myself, not having a bathroom, not being able to shower except bathing in the ocean, all the while surrounded by stingrays. After the first couple of days of living on the island when those practical issues were mostly overcome, I believe all of us started to focus more on things beyond physical comfort. My moment of "magic hour" was when the island did not feel like a foreign place anymore. Spending time alone, observing, looking closer, noticing small things, trying to absorb everything around me, made me feel like I was a part of Mother Horn just like her plants, birds, and animals. That feeling of intimacy with nature was my brightest memory from this trip.

It was definitely an adventure, but much more so a unique learning experience. Being away from my daily life routines and responsibilities gave me time to appreciate solitude and silence. There was never any hurry, no to-do lists or schedules to follow except being on time for dinner in the evening. It gave me an opportunity to think without interruptions, to quietly observe and sketch without any rush. This peace of mind gave space to new ideas and inspiration to create. Being out of my comfort zone gave me a different perspective on my life and helped me realize how little I really need to be happy. It made me open my mind and explore the world beyond what I know, and notice and appreciate simple things.

We were encouraged to explore the island and document our observations and discoveries through sketching and writing in our visual journals. This practice helped me develop better sensitivity to my surroundings and made me more observant. I realized that I often overlook so many things around me, because of being busy and focused on my immediate tasks and responsi-

bilities. Living side-by-side with wildlife and being able to watch and study its behavior and habitat gave me a deeper understanding of nature and the importance of its conservation.

Another big part of this trip was the experience of living on the island as a group and learning to depend on each other. All participants did their part to make it possible for the group to get to the island and back and live there for nine days. So even though I had time to myself and could be alone, I also had people who shared this experience with me and faced some of the same challenges.

The post-trip work was no less important than our time on the island. We all were required to develop a concept and create a body of work influenced by our island experience. Inspired by Walter Anderson's work and the textures of the island, I decided to create linocut prints that would communicate the idea of human exploration of nature through interaction and tactile contact. I did it by juxtaposing and contrasting human and natural elements. As a result, I came up with a series of linocuts with hands holding different natural objects such as shells, feathers, and flowers. By itself, the process of creating a linocut and carving into the texture of linoleum is similar to how the forces of nature affect the surface of the island and create textures on the wood, shells, sand, plants, animals, etc. Horn Island 28 showcased a variety of media and subject matter. Some of the media included painting, drawing, photography as well as collage, steel and wood sculpture, ceramics, papier-mâché, fabric, and wood burning. The subjects varied from island landscapes and wildlife to abstract paintings and sculptures. It is interesting that even though we all went on this trip as a group, each participant ended up with something unique.

Before, when I heard people talking about their Horn Island experience, it always seemed to me like a place detached from the reality of this world where one goes to get transformed and inspired. Camping on the island in the Gulf of Mexico seemed like a very adventurous and romantic idea. However, from the very beginning, our professor, Don DuMont, emphasized that this trip would require a lot of work and effort on our part that would continue after we came back and if we were planning on a fun beach vacation we should have just walked away right then. Our professor was right — the Horn Island trip was not a vacation! Living in primitive camping conditions took a lot of flexibility and perseverance at times, but the time spent there and the things I have discovered were rewarding beyond limit and will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I am very thankful to all the people whose enthusiasm and vision, as well as financial support, helped this MCA program to successfully continue and develop for almost three decades now.



Horn Island ghost crab, May 2012. Photo courtesy of Iryna Kurylo.

Iryna Kurylo is a junior at Memphis College of Art majoring in Illustration.

# Overcoming Odds: Harnessing the Power of Art to Foster Resilience

*It's hard to care, when you don't.* This statement from one of our youth reveals sentiments shared by many in our region. As artists and educators, we must acknowledge the issues and challenges many individuals face, such as poverty, violence and the consequences of natural disasters. Educators face challenges of meeting national academic standards while addressing the seemingly overwhelming needs, interests and varying abilities of students. But for communities to be healthy and vibrant, we need to enhance each person's capabilities and ensure individuals have the tools they need, not only to survive, but to thrive. Innovative, collaborative art initiatives can provide valuable opportunities that result in resilient individuals and communities.

I will begin with an overview of resilience, then share examples of art activities that were designed and implemented to explore the role of art for fostering resilience. I will conclude with the implications for strengthening community through art. Please note that several examples are shared here, but with respect to confidentiality and protection of our vulnerable populations, I have purposely omitted any information that would directly identify individuals or groups of people.

**Resilience.** Why is it that some people seemingly "bounce back" when bad things happen, while others seem to flounder? What makes one person or groups of people capable of overcoming the odds? Can we foster resilience through art? If so, how?

Resilience is the ability to thrive despite adversity (Bendtro & Larson, 2006; Heise & MacGillivray, 2011). It is a pattern of behavior that demonstrates that a person is doing well despite being exposed to a significant amount of risk or adversity (Medoff, 2010). Resilience theory has been used in psychology and

social work, and is gaining popularity in educational settings. Many individuals who demonstrate resilience are optimistic, creative problem solvers who feel confident in their strengths. They often view obstacles as opportunities.

It is believed that certain protective factors can enhance resilience, such as individual attributes, family qualities, and adequate support systems outside the family. Individual attributes can include cognitive abilities, self-esteem, adaptability and positive outlook, sense of humor, persistence, social competence, successful problem solving and mastery over something. Family qualities include nurturing familial relationships, high parental expectations and involvement in the child's life. Support systems outside the family can include connections to the community, religious organizations, safe neighborhoods, and community resources, such as libraries, recreational opportunities and high quality health and social services.

The arts can strengthen protective factors by focusing on creativity, flexibility and problem solving (Heise, 2012). It can help students develop mastery of art techniques and creative processes, and serve as a viable means of expression on thoughts and ideas. The cognitive function of the arts can help us learn about our world. In addition, art inquiry can include important social, emotional, and historical contexts, such as investigations of artists who use humor in art, or artists whose perseverance has contributed to their success. Education in the arts can also embody high expectations in a safe and nurturing environment. Students are encouraged to take risks in art making as they explore the role of art for individual expression and the roles of art in society. Inquiry prompts include,

"Is this art? Why or why not? Is this good art? What was the artist trying to say? How do we know? What does this art reveal about what we value, as individuals, or as a community?"

Art education majors at the University of Memphis are taught how to design meaningful art experiences that link learning to real life and are aimed at helping students recognize and celebrate personal and collective strengths and assets. The program is guided by resilience theory in that it encourages us to reframe descriptors from the negative such as failure or delinquent, towards recognition of positive attributes such as resourceful, creative problem solver. They then take what they learned about using art to strengthen resilience and design, develop, implement and evaluate community-based art education to strengthen community.

**Altered lives, altered books.** Many people feel powerless as they experience trauma in their lives. Some feel helpless from being displaced due to natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes. Some are homeless due to poverty. Others live in fear from domestic violence, neglect or abuse. Teaching art that only focuses on principles and elements of design, or only creation of pretty pictures devoid of personal connection, neglects the potential of art to discover who we are in relation to our world, and to empower us to become change agents. It misses an opportunity to foster resilience by identifying and celebrating strengths and assets.

An altered book project was successful in changing perceptions and empowering individuals to become change agents by first identifying elements of their life that they wanted to change, and things they

wanted to stay the same. Discarded books were a perfect medium since it is an object that was deemed no longer useful. It provided a metaphor for transforming trash into a work of art. In addition, it sparked reflection and controversy surrounding violation of preconceived notions long ago instilled about the sanctity of books. As young children, we are taught never to write or mark the pages of a book. Now I was asking them to cut, paste, paint, sculpt and drastically alter the original form. This initially brought about feelings of discomfort.

A discussion on transforming trash into works of art included metaphors for empowerment, transformation and artistic development. Using resources from the local Art museum of art provided information on artists who create sculptural books. One student demonstrated symbolically that one thing she wanted to change was time. As she juggled the demands of life, school, family, work, there was little time. Time seemed to be fleeting too rapidly, so she depicted that visually with numbers falling off the clock. One thing in her life that she hoped would change was financial challenges, which was communicated by the tower of money that popped up when the book pages were opened. This art lesson used the process and content of art education to engage students in critical reflection and aesthetics as they used art to visually communicate and explore concepts of resilience. A discussion on resilience included empowering individuals. One student exclaimed that having power over at least one area of your life makes you feel in control, and thus more

resilient. At the conclusion of the project, participants revealed feelings of joy and empowerment as they successfully transformed trash to treasure. Some also reported heightened awareness of the importance of reevaluating the limitations they previously accepted in their lives and the necessity to explore creative solutions in their own lives.

**Woven tapestries.** Another group of university students partnered with a local urban community center in a low-income area. Neighborhood youth brought fabric scraps that represented important moments in their life. One student brought an old t-shirt that belonged to her little brother who had passed away. One student brought an old shirt that his father wore. And another brought a sport jersey from his past. Weavings and tapestries from a local art gallery of weavings were shared with participants. Fabric was torn in strips and woven into a collaborative wall hanging. A discussion ensued about the memories we attach to objects and appropriate ways to honor the people and events that we value. Participants talked about the power of each individual contributing to the whole, which resulted in the creation of a successful work of art. Others mentioned the therapeutic properties of doing this repetitive work with others.

**Mural.** Partnering with a safe housing project, artists and art education majors facilitated the creation of a mural with children whose lives are in crisis. Focusing on identity, safety, things in our lives that bring us joy, and things in our community that help us feel a sense of belonging, children's creativity flourished. They enthusiastically drew, stamped, and painted flowers, hand prints, houses, and bridges to create a collaborative mural to beautify their hallways. As a result of participation in this collaborative art project, children were able to just be kids, to have fun and to not think about their current fears and challenges. Through the art making process, they focused on their current assets in their lives and created visions for their future.

In addition to the diverse populations previously mentioned, art education faculty and students also

partner with non-profits, such as the Salvation Army, YMCA, and Creative Aging. Some teach art in after school programs for children who are disabled, focusing on relevant themes, such as overcoming obstacles, or persistence. Others teach art in a senior residential center, facilitating art that depicts memory, leaving a legacy and visual stories. Another group design and implement an art program in an urban community setting with children living in poverty that focuses on art centered on issues of human rights. Several students work with a local cancer foundation to offer art to patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment. And others work in shelters with families who are homeless using art and literacy to change negative stereotypes and empower disadvantaged to have a voice in the community conversation.

Using a framework of resilience, we focus on the assets of the community as a source of ideation. Instead of focusing on the trauma, we bring attention to the assets or things that help us survive challenging times. We create symbols to represent our sources of joy and strength as a reminder that we can overcome. We make art that communicates who we are and who we can be. We focus on our vision for our future.

The role of art is often identified as a means of expression. It has been used to celebrate culture and record history. But it can also play an important role in fostering resilience in individuals and communities. As artists and educators, we can harness the power of art to foster resilience and thus to empower others as they reframe our environment to see potential instead of despair. But much more work is needed. Explicit ways to document, evaluate and disseminate important findings of community-based art are necessary. I encourage each of us in the region to consider working with artists, museums and other community partners to become facilitators and co-contributors to the individual and collective narratives that comprise our communities. Through art, we can create meaningful experiences that honor each person's perspective and allows full participation in the transformation of their lives as they move towards enhanced capacity.

Bendtro, L.K. & Larson, S.J (2006). *The resilience revolution.* Solution Tree Bloomington, IN.

Heise, D. & MacGillivray, L (2011). *Implementing an Art Program for Children in a Homeless Shelter.* *Studies in Art Education*, 52(4), 323-336.

Heise, D. (2012). *Teaching art to children in crisis.* Paper presentation at the National Art Education Association Convention. New York NY March 2012.

Medoff, L. (2010). *Resilience in the classroom: Helping students with special needs.* Kaplan Inc. New York.



University of Memphis art education major creates an altered book to communicate change and continuity. 2012. Photograph by Lauren Hamlett.



Mural facilitated by art education majors, created by children residing in safe housing. 2012. Photograph by Deborah Flanagan.

Dr. Donalyn Heise is a porcelain artist and Associate Professor of Art Education at the University of Memphis



# The Rocky Horton Picture A Teacher Still Learning

Rocky Horton has come a long way. The artist made his entree into Nashville's art scene as an interesting abstract painter who turned into one of the city's most notable – his work featured in a Cheekwood Museum of Art survey of Tennessee abstract painters in 2009. Horton's also become an educator. He accepted an adjunct post at David Lipscomb University in 2004 and emerged as a full professor after teaching one semester. Since then, Lipscomb arguably has evolved into the most progressive university arts program in Nashville. That Lipscomb is a conservative, Christian school makes this even more notable. If you were in the concert audience this past spring when artist/songwriter Daniel Johnston let fly the line "Do yourself a favor/Be your own savior," you would've been excused for feeling a little lost. Of course, if you go to a Horton show expecting a display of abstract paintings, you'll feel similarly confused.

## Sacre Totems

Meeting up with Rocky Horton at his exhibition at **Twist Gallery**, we started in the back room, watching two videos that helped to set the tone for the exhibition. I prefer seeing an artist's work alone in an empty gallery. However, walking through the show with Horton, he revealed how straight-forward the work actually is. Horton creates plain, bold expressions, leaving any number of complex ambiguities to overtake viewers who are left to their conclusions. In this case, it's the audience that makes the meaning of the show, and one can imagine a random selection of gallery-goers offering widely diverging reports.

Horton directs my attention to *All the Songs God is Responsible for According to Grammy Awards Acceptance Speeches 1971-Present*. The video presents a cavalcade of famous recording artists at various Grammy Awards ceremonies through the years – Bono, Bob Dylan, George Jones, Destiny's Child, Christina Aguilera, and Aaron Neville all make an appearance. Whitney Houston makes about half a dozen. Each personality appears just long enough to *thank God* – or some divine derivation there of – before a jump cut presents the next prayerful persona. When Whitney Houston thanks God she seems sincere if a little altered. Bono's sincerity is obscured by smug and Dylan's inscrutable mask renders the word's "thank" and "God" as surreally impenetrable as the vision of an "Orphan with his gun/Crying like a fire in the sun." Likewise, Horton isn't telling. The relentless editing certainly brings a sense of the absurd to the proceedings, but it doesn't make a

ringing judgment about celebrity spirituality or the easy Christianity of the privileged. It could easily offend – especially in a religiously preoccupied city like Nashville. It could also inspire a less cynical viewer who might be pleased to hear a warm profession of faith from a barely dressed Beyonce, flanked by the rest of the nearly-naked Destiny's Child: "We wanna thank – first of all – God." Praised be his name.

According to Horton, another video is based on "this pretty obscure Bible verse where Peter was walking through Jerusalem and people would bring out their sick so Peter's shadow would pass over them." Horton's made similar videos nine times in nine different cities, and a variety of performers have taken on the lead role in the various epics. The version at Twist is cut to a 5:15 loop that echos the chapter and verse of the Book of Acts where the story of Peter's shadow appears. The film presents a performer's feet walking through a city. The performer wears strange boots and the shadow is unmistakably that of someone in a Peter Pan costume. Horton has replaced the Bible's saint – The Rock of the Catholic Church – with the secular Saint of Perpetual Childhood. Is this blasphemy? Did Jesus say that no one enters heaven without becoming "as little children?" Is Horton being childlike or just childish?

The artist's *Sacer Totem* takes on that sacred rite of childhood – secular and Christian – Christmas. Utilizing illuminated, outdoor nativity figures from mismatched sets, Horton stacks the familiar characters from the Biblical narrative, creating a hierarchical column: wise men on the bottom, Joseph, then Mary, with baby Jesus on top, beckoning viewers with his open hands and strange painted expression. Combining elements of Native American culture with the Christian imagery from a now-largely-secular celebration, Horton explains that he "was interested in looking at these bereft expression of faith, but it's not a critique or a celebration." Again, more absurdity, but also the kind of playfulness that remembers what it was like to be a child that "believed" in that multifaceted "Christmas spirit" that combines a supernatural Santa with seasonal generosity and the story of a child whose birth heralded peace on earth and good will between men. I can still feel it sometimes, and I could feel it in Horton's gallery.

"This is the quiet space," explained Horton, leading me to the Twist Etc. gallery. Entering the space, we were forced sideways by the 5' x 5' x 7' scaffolding setting just inside the door. The apparatus

is painted, gleaming white with Lexus auto paint and – although we discovered a few imperfections – the illusion of flawlessness created by the shining, monochrome surface is a bold one. "A lot of people wouldn't come in because they thought something was still being installed," laughs Horton, recalling the night of the opening.

365247 was inspired by the ubiquitous and omnipresent scaffolding one sees erected alongside massive churches and cathedrals all over the world. Necessary for the year-round cleaning and maintenance these venerable buildings require, scaffolding is commonly considered an unsightly nuisance obscuring one's view of a famous facade. Here, Horton suggests that the scaffolding can be seen as another adornment, as an extension of the facade itself, and as something that's been made beautiful through the act of making beauty.

It's an apt metaphor for what an artist does. I didn't ask him, but – given the stance Horton takes in the rest of the show – I can't imagine him offering any guidance or casting any judgment. Horton and his work in this exhibition have an admirable integrity in their complete lack of answers to the questions they ask. Like a good comedian, Horton gets the best laughs when he plays it straight, and – despite all the absurdities – there is real beauty to be found here for those with eyes to see it. Or not.

## Open

Around the time that Horton became a full time professor, the Chair position of Lipscomb's art department became vacant. Horton's recommendation played a part in Laura Lake Smith's ascendancy from an art history adjunct at the school to the head of the department. The two immediately joined forces to spearhead nothing short of a game changing agenda at the school.

"What kind of students do we want to graduate? How would we teach this class if we were teaching it at Yale?" Horton repeats the questions the pair asked themselves at that time. Imagining anything was possible gave Horton and Smith the luxury of seeing past the kind of arbitrary limits and boundaries that inevitably calcify within the bureaucracies of all institutions. "The limits are fictitious," Horton insists, "and you can just dream your dream around it."

In recent years, Lipscomb has rebuilt their art curriculum from the ground-up, added new studio and gallery facilities and created new, public series that have seen some of art's biggest names visiting

Nashville and speaking to packed houses. Richard Tuttle's Presidential Lectureship appearance in 2009 was intimate and sublime. Tony Tasset's Visiting Artist Program talk in 2010 was as entertaining as it was illuminating. And, of course, there was the Daniel Johnston concert which coincided with a Lipscomb exhibition of the artist's drawings.

The latest at Lipscomb is the student-run Open gallery in Nashville's downtown Arcade. I'm not sure why it's taken a Nashville schools so long to open a place like **Open**. Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, TN has an off-campus Downtown Gallery. The University of Tennessee in Knoxville has one too. Lipscomb has once again blazed a trail for the rest of Nashville's art schools to follow.

Open is completely programmed by Lipscomb's art students. Horton assigned roles to a small group of seniors who then organized the rest of the students involved with the space. The gallery made it's grand opening during Nashville's First Saturday Art Crawl in September, displaying an exhibition of sculpture and performance by artist Joel Parsons.

Joel Parson's *The Rehearsal* uses ballet as a metaphor, exploring the tension between the perfect and the real – the various pieces on display take their cues from specific ballet movements. The show is infused with the frustration that Parsons – an untrained, amateur dancer – associates with ballet and the love he feels for his partner. In a sense, the artist gets the best of dancer in the pieces he ultimately creates. "When my body can't, the objects can," he explains.

The centerpiece of the gallery's opening night was a performance by Parsons that found the artist attempting to perfect a ballet move while looking into a mirror – the way an actual dancer in an actual dance studio might. In the Open space, Parson's foot was tethered to a mirror made of flexible material and hung from the ceiling. As Parson's struggled to hold ballet poses he'd seek guidance in the a mirror warped by the very movements he was struggling to observe.

The pieces in the show were not labeled and the complete lack of didactic information gives the gallery more of the feel of a dance studio than a formal presentation. The display was simultaneously a show of individual sculptures as well as an ambitious installation space. Against one wall, a pair of ballet slippers with "toes" made from Budweiser beer cans was affixed with masking tape. They were funny and they earned a laugh and a thought about whether a drunk Parsons might be a better dancer?

A piece nestled in a far corner found a sculpture that mirrored – no pun – the elements that were present in Parson's performance: the mirror modeled with a small sheet of discarded plastic; a dancer formed from garbage bags zip ties. I'm not sure whether or not this piece was created before or after the performance, but I hope the model came first: The idea of working out a performance with a 3D maquette demonstrates the artist's intense understanding of the role that space plays in a performance. This piece didn't make me want to see more sculpture, it made me want to see more dancing.

My favorite piece in the show featured a found newspaper photo of a shirtless male dancer sitting in an exhausted slump on a dance studio chair – a defeated towel hanging around his neck. The caption informed the viewer that the dancer was photographed rehearsing the ballet *Don Quixote* – a futile toiler at perfection if ever their was one. The artist added silly, shiny, plastic drops falling from the dancer's face and I couldn't tell if these were blood, sweat, or tears. Perhaps they were all of the above? For Parsons, the dancer's quest leads to a kind of effortful, martyrdom. Whether the metaphor holds, perfect dancing – or nearly so – most certainly destroys dancers, and there is something Promethean about the light they follow. Some may not realize it emanates from the belly of a dragon, but, surely, many must glimpse the beast and just keep dancing.

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Louise Bourgeois, TOPIARY: THE ART OF IMPROVING NATURE (details), 1998. Portfolio of nine copper plate etchings: drypoint and aquatint, 39 1/4 x 27 3/4". © Louise Bourgeois Trust / Licensed by VAGA, NY

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**Joshua Brinlee, Ashley Feagin, Ernest Forward, Andrew Smith, Ross Turner, and Eunika Rogers University of Mississippi, Meek Hall Gallery 130 September 4-27, 2012**

The exhibition that recently occupied Meek Hall Gallery 130 was an eclectic one, meant to highlight the new staff and faculty hired by the University of Mississippi Art Department. This new blood, bringing a youthful breath of air to the department includes Josh Brinlee, Ashley Feagin, Ernest Forward, Eunika Rodgers, Andrew Smith, and Ross Turner. While there was no universal theme shared by the artists in the gallery, it was clear that each person featured chose pieces that exemplified who they are as artists.

Joshua Brinlee received his BFA and MFA from Memphis College of Art in Memphis, TN. His digital images were a tongue-in-cheek reference to traditional portraiture and he used himself as a muse. These pseudo-paintings were humorous because of the manner in which he portrayed himself, sometimes as an austere male, sometimes as a well-to-do Renaissance woman. The backgrounds in the images were reminiscent of da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," replicating the placed landscape behind the subject of a painting of Brinlee himself. Brinlee featured two pairs of paintings, each containing a male and female rendition of him. While they were well crafted and enjoyable to look at, I am curious to see where these self-portraits will take Brinlee next and what subject matter he will pursue.

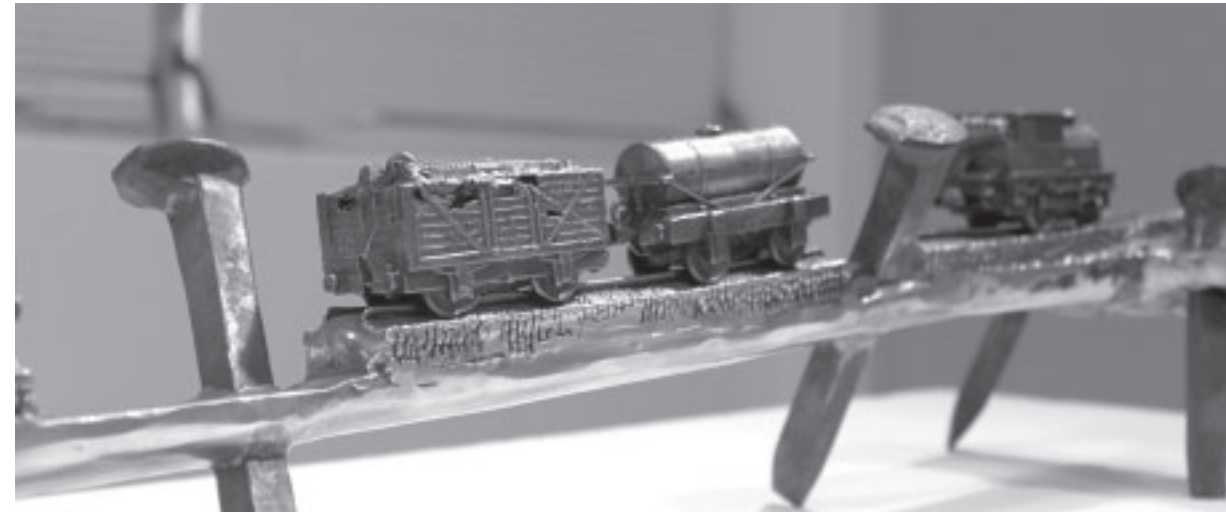
The next faculty member in this exhibition was Ashley Feagin, whose photography featured everyday scenes that invited the viewer to participate in the moment that had been captured. Broken plates upon the floor, an unmade bed, and a pile of presents were just a few of the images seen in Feagin's featured pieces. Many of the photos left much to the viewer to create his or her own narrative about the story that was unfolding and what the artist was trying to communicate. Each photo featured a limited color palette, with much emphasis placed upon white and natural lighting. Again, this allowed the viewer to picture him or herself in these everyday situations, or recall moments from his or her own memory.

Ernest Forward and Andrew Smith were the first two people to fill the new technical assistant spaces for ceramics and sculpture. Ernest's work featured a Pabst Blue Ribbon cooler and umbrella made

from ceramic materials. It did little for the viewer except publicize Ernest's contract and endorsement by the beer company. The viewer otherwise received little insight into the artist's inspiration, unless it pertains to nostalgia in the objects he represented. Upon listening to Forward's artist's lecture however, I must acquiesce that I have a new appreciation for his work. This is probably due to his experimentation with materials and technology. Just because he is considered a ceramic artist does not mean that he is limited to creating from ceramic materials.

While Forward's work is shrewd conceptually, Andrew Smith's metal fabrication work was full of representations of what inspires him. Most are of childhood memories of bridges and trains, and from his artist's statement one can deduce that he moved from house to house as a child. While he seems to create work from concept and has a strong conceptual vision, his experimentation with material could be found lacking. Both Forward and Smith are filling exciting new spaces within the Art Department, as the need for technical assistants to help with day-to-day functioning can be contributed to growth within the programs.

Ross Turner is a BFA graduate of the University of Mississippi who was recently hired as the Visual Resource Specialist for the Art Department. His printmaking work featured humorous and exaggerated



Andrew Smith, *Untitled Mnemonic I*, Cast Aluminium and Bronze, Steel. Photo Courtesy of Ross Turner.

stories and memories from childhood. His print *Yabba Dabba Dukes of Hazzard* stirred something in my own childhood memories of pushing myself around in Little Tyke cars, feeling as though I was about to break the sound barrier with my speed. His ability to create a pleasant wistfulness for childhood through his subject matter make Turner's prints a joy to view.

The last artist contributing work to the exhibition was Eunika Rogers. The stark contrast between Roger's earthy browns and oranges against the white walls of the gallery made as big a statement as the work and subject matter themselves. Rogers's paintings appeared to be made of watercolor or gouache upon first glance, but in actuality the artist used clay dug from the Mississippi landscape. The use of clay and dirt as paint account for the range of earth tone in her work. Each painting was a portrait of a woman, and the painter appeared to be seated in near proximity. The women of the portraits were all drinking wine, and all seem to be engaged in company with someone. They seemed to recall a moment in time many women have enjoyed; drinking a glass of wine and sharing a laugh with friends.

This new group of artists has a wide range in medium and interests that should prove to add even more depth to the Art Department.

**THINK TANK**

**Rockettown, Nashville, TN September 22, 2012**

On Saturday, September 22nd, a sampling of the brightest graphic design stars in America descended upon the Southeast Region coming to enlighten, intrigue and inspire students, professionals and enthusiasts. The Nashville chapter of AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Artists), the professional association for design, hosted its annual *THINK TANK* one-day design conference at Rockettown in downtown Nashville, TN. Invited guest speakers included Aaron Draplin, Louise Fili, Bobby C. Martin Jr. and Doug Powell. Attendees came from as far as Alabama to garner the chance to hear some of these well-known design heroes.

Leading off the invited guests was Doug Powell, of Minneapolis-based Schwartz Powell Design. He is a designer, entrepreneur and strategist. Currently, he holds the position of President of AIGA and brings a wealth of sustainable design and systems design experience working with corporate and startup clients.

Bobby C. Martin Jr., of the NYC-based OCD (Original Champions of Design), is a designer and brand strategist. This international award-winning designer has had an enviable career working for the mega agency, Ogilvy & Mather and worldwide brand, Nokia Communications in London. Some of his newer clients include the Girls Scouts of the USA, Museum of African Art and St. Bartholomew's Church in New York.

Louise Fili, of NYC-based Louise Fili, LTD, is the true master of awe-inspiring typographic design specializing in logo, package, restaurant and book design. Her early career began under the tutelage of legendary typographer, Herb Lubalin. Some of her notable clients are Tiffany & Co., Good Housekeeping, and the US Postal Service. She's launched the careers of well-known newcomers, Jessica Hische and Dana Tanamachi. Recently, her new book, *Elegantissima*, was released. The book is a monograph of her nearly forty-year career as a designer, featuring case studies and amazing work.



Speakers Doug Powell, Aaron Draplin, Louise Fili and Bobby Martin Jr. during the Q&A Wrap-up Session. 2012. Photo by David Jon Walker.

**Art Education: Making Memphis**

Writing and talking about art education in the Memphis area is a subject dear to my heart. As a native Memphian, I have had the benefit of being involved with arts agencies most of my life — as a student, teacher, supervisor, artist, and professor — and from these experiences can attest to how the arts can shape an individual. It certainly made a difference in my life where my early visual arts experiences began in parks and recreation centers.

We are fortunate in this area to have a wealth of opportunities for children and adults to learn in and through the arts. Art resources are plentiful, and address the needs of virtually any community member, whether they live in the suburbs or the heart of the city. The organizations and individuals that support the arts in Memphis understand thoroughly the importance of enriching the lives of children and adults by learning in and through the visual arts and advocating to keep the arts alive in this community. They also understand that the exposure and experiences individuals receive enhance community creative capacity while being fun and rewarding at a personal level.

Probably the largest visual art impact on young people in the community comes through the schools. We are fortunate that local school systems have actively supported the visual arts for a number of years. The vast majority of public schools have a trained and licensed art educator working in K-12 schools. This provides many students with access to opportunities in the arts without significant cost. Both public systems are proponents of arts integration, a philosophy of teaching where the arts can be used alone, or as a means to assimilate subject matter across the curriculum. Many private, charter, and home schools also offer art lessons and activities. These institutions and organizations help many talented students move on to the next step in their development by preparing them for scholarship and higher education opportunities in the visual arts.

Many of the art teachers working in these schools are trained at **The University of Memphis**, or through the graduate programs at **Memphis College of Art**. Both schools provide a solid learning base for educators that supply the community with well-trained teachers who are knowledgeable in content and pedagogy. In addition to training teachers to work with students, both institutions also offer community education courses, children's Saturday Schools and, in the case of MCA, a series of summer art camps, as well as portfolio development.

These opportunities are greatly enhanced and supported by top quality museum education programs available to all ages. Memphis museums provide outstanding activities for children and adults through Saturday Workshops, Family Art Days, and after school activities. **Brooks Museum of Art, Dixon Gallery and Gardens**, and the **Children's Museum** all offer excellent programs that enrich individual experiences in the visual arts. Many of these are free to the public. These offerings are available not just in the museums, but also in school and community settings through outreach programs. Examples include Brook's Art in the Basic Curriculum program, Creation Station and Wacky Wednesday's; Dixon Gallery's Art to Grow Van, Family Studio Days and Mini Masters; and the Children's Museum Animation Station, Creative Thinker Tinker Time and Tot Art; to mention but a few.

Community groups and associations also play an important role in educating in the visual arts. Programs are located in venues ranging from parks to converted firehouses, and thus serve a wide group of community stakeholders. The **Black Arts Alliance/Firehouse Community Center, Caritas Village, YMCA, Rozelle Artists Guild, Crosstown Arts, Broad Avenue Art Walks, South Main Trolley Art Tours** and a variety of community arts centers, area parks and recreation programs throughout the Memphis area offer a variety of classes and experiences. These activities build skills, allow individuals to experience new media, provide opportunities to gain an appreciation of the arts, and supply services that may not otherwise be available. Individuals also support the visual arts by teaching private and group lessons. There are many other groups and agencies not named here-faith based organizations and others that also support development through the arts with camps, field trips and other activities.

While most people in this community would instinctively agree that the arts are important in personal development, there is also a growing body of evidence that suggests that learning in and through the arts builds skills sets that will be essential for the workforce of tomorrow. The next generation will need to be able to think independently, critically, and creatively to solve problems and make good judgments as tomorrow's leaders and community members. These are all skills the visual arts develop. However, and I believe very importantly, there should also be a level of joy for an individual in simply making and appreciating art. In this community, we are privileged to have so many opportunities for people of all ages to engage with and grow through the visual arts.



Connecting art and children through Art to Grow. Photo courtesy of Dixon Gallery and Gardens.

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**On Location Part II: Land Portraits**  
**University of Tennessee Downtown Gallery**  
**Knoxville, Tennessee**  
**July 6-27, 2012**

Any concept of landscape as a literal depiction of the outside world, preferably with a pastoral persuasion, is an outdated genre barely nodded to in *On Location Part II: Land Portraits*, curated by Brian R. Jobe at the University of Tennessee Downtown Gallery. *Land Portraits* was preceded by a decidedly traditional exhibit, *On Location Part I: Five Tennessee Plein Air Painters*, and its departure from the predictable enabled it to establish itself as the real fresh air.

The group exhibit is by the eleven-member Culture Laboratory Collective, which grew out of the RJP Nomadic Gallery in Lubbock, Texas. Consisting of Piotr Chizinski, J.D. Durham, Loren Erdrich, Sarah Haven, Brian R. Jobe, Shreepad Joglekar, Ryder Richards, Sue Anne Rische, Ian F. Thomas, Dryden Wells, and Jonathan Whitfill, many of the members have never met in person, but meet regularly in a chat room to discuss ideas.

It is risky to produce a cohesive group exhibit under those conditions, with various media, even when it is restrained by a specific theme. In this case, the results were eloquent. With many pieces using panoramic compositions, the flow of the work along the walls produced an illusion of endless flat horizon. Jonathan Whitfield's *A Turtle lives for a Long Time* and *Sunset*, both book art pieces, were mounted on the wall with ridged pages falling open like strata in rock. The nine horizontally hanging double books in *A Turtle lives for a Long Time* seem to reference nine decades of change. The paper was dyed in various layers in *Sunset*, lending a feel of organic change over time.

More references to time in the profile of the earth are contained in Ryder Richards' *Marking Time: Compression*, a mixed media and video installation concerned with erosion and its

evolution of use for various locations. Two-by-fours that had been partially destroyed by hours of hand sanding were hung horizontally on the wall, along with a hammer that had been used in their deterioration. Rough white and gold striping on the wood demarcated the damage. An accompanying video documented the process.

Jobe's own sculpture, *Channel Modules*, went beyond earth strata to describe endless modern highways. The long, wall-mounted construction of square framed wood and orange reflective tape resembled a Swedish dish rack with a higher purpose. It was most effective when viewed by looking through one side, to appreciate the perspective and diminishing lines as it extends to a false infinity.

Ian F. Thomas's *Yesterday's Tomorrow* allowed the artist to perform with it in the gallery on the night of the opening. Coming from the coal mining area of Pennsylvania, the artist has witnessed the destruction wrought by mountain top removal. The abstract ceramic dome was continuously scraped during the course of the evening by the artist, resulting in an increasing pile of grit on the floor beneath it.

One of the most elegant works present was Piotr Chizinski's *Department of Food-Water-Shelter*. Laser-cut, three-dimensional paper models of FEMA trailers, barges, and water tanks were mounted on a low floor riser painted in two tones of flat gray. Arranged in careful lines and rows, the clean white models were at once perfect and utterly generic. Deliberately devoid of personal identity, they exist in the real world as part of an infrastructure to ensure security for a society. However, the artist muses that the system is "like a wolf wrapped in sheep's wool, cloaked by the promises of modern development."

Straying from the external terrain entirely, Sue Anne Rische explored the landscape of human anatomy with her large-scale charcoal and silver leaf drawing, *The Gorge*. The four by ten foot drawing depicts her teeth, as seen from the inside, as if there was

a wide-angle camera mounted on the rear of her tongue. The teeth are ordered, but there is enough space between them for the viewer to want to know what is outside those cracks. The outside light appears to be sky seen through a peculiar wall of boulders.

In nature, forms repeat themselves from the molecular to the cosmic, and parts of the human body stand in really well as part of a landscape that exists in the world that surrounds us. In challenging the notion of what constitutes a landscape, there are really no limitations.



**Jonathan Whitfill, *A Turtle Lives For A Long Time*, 2012.**  
**Photograph courtesy of Denise Stewart-Sanabria.**

**Denise Stewart-Sanabria is a Knoxville based artist and writer.**

**The Day on Fire: Apocalypse in Contemporary Art**  
**Slocumb Galleries, Tipton Gallery, and the**  
**SUBmarine Gallery**  
**August 20 – September 14, 2012**  
**Johnson City, TN**

Appropriately timed, as we near the end of the Mayan calendar, The Department of Art & Design's Visiting Artist and Gallery Committee of East Tennessee State University juried an exhibition centered around the half-nervous joke of the year: the apocalypse, the end times, Judgement Day, doomsday. Although, as pointed out by Chase Westfall, one of the committee members who wrote the essay *Future Barbarians* for the exhibition's book, people have been interested in predicting the end of the world throughout much of recorded history. The reasons are cultural, personal, and deeply complex; far too much to address in one short review, but the multiple galleries containing *The Day on Fire: Apocalypse in Contemporary Art* came close to describing the highly nuanced fantasy-terror of our big finish.

The exhibition contained a variety of mediums, including video art, painting, drawing, photography, multiple printmaking techniques, and sculpture. The varied mediums and techniques reflected the many different approaches artists took to the subject matter, as well as the complicated range of emotion within their broader choices. Some artists chose a fairly traditional representation of the end times. For example, Kristen Casaletto's *Apocalypse* was a large woodcut print with watercolor and with an outstretched skeleton, hounds, ominous clouds, and other recognizable symbols and Gregory Martens' *The Moment Before The Apocalypse: Planet Earth* was a screen monoprint on paper containing the many different cultural cosmic predictions and catalysts for our destruction. Other artists chose similar imagery, but did so with humor. In Christopher Mir's *Devil*, there was a cartoonish, black enamel painting on canvas. In Casey Jex Smith's *Dragon*, a delicate line drawing of a strange, multi-headed beast appeared more likely to beat you at Scrabble than cause the end of the world. And Steve Cole's *Jesus Is Back* was a print similar to old action film posters, complete with an absurd tagline: "And this time it's no more Mr. Nice Guy".

Other artists embraced a somewhat romanticized post-apocalypse survival in the re-wild-ed Earth, full of new territory, new challenges, and essentially new people. Bryce Lafferty's *Exotic Flora*, a watercolor piece reminiscent of architectural drawings and ideas about sustainable living, seemed almost nostalgic for the wonder of possibility in an untamed land. Ted Vogel's *Swimming Up Stream*, a mixed media sculpture, was peaceful and wistful in appearance, though the title suggests struggle. Not quite romanticized, but certainly poetic and ethereal, some artists embraced an attitude of 'ending as beginning'. Carrie Schnieder's video *Burning House*, Alexander Solomon's manipulated photograph on metal titled *The Throw*, and Adam Williams' photograph *In Trying Times, Don't Quit Trying I* have all created a sense of timelessness ... of life un-contained by definitive endings.

There was another possible grouping of artists who used imagery not directly associated with the apocalypse as it's commonly thought of, yet still conveyed the feeling of calamity and a sudden alteration of experiential reality. In Katie Vaughn's *Collected Suggestions*, a series of drawings depicted empty and messy conference-like rooms, Cheryl Hochberg's *Itchy Kangaroos* was a painting that contained exactly what the title suggested, and Kate Gilmore's video *A Construction for Disaster*, which depicted a woman struggling with quite literally a mountain of papers on a rickety desk-like structure. Under the same umbrella, though rooted to particular time periods through pop cultural references, Ned Snider's *Okay W/ My Decay* and Josh Azarella's *Untitled #15 (Tank Man)* did the opposite of previously mentioned work that created a sense of timelessness and instead solidified a bodily existence that was extremely temporary with equally temporary and shifting context.

In the postscript of Westfall's essay, he ended with the observation that "...in an exhibition of primarily American artists, only one overt reference to [Hurricane Katrina] appears and none to the terrorist attacks of September 11th. He listed possibilities that you might expect for this absence, such as "simple oversight" or "sloppy curating", but that it could also be "something in the generational zeitgeist". Perhaps it can be attributed to the fact that in the case of Hurricane Katrina and September 11th, we as a society survived and our structures remain (mostly) intact. As Mira Gerard pointed out in her own



**Gwendolyn Bigham, *Release*, 2012. Wood, steel, glass. Photo courtesy of Jamie Santos-Prowse.**

essay for the same book, when describing the video *Post Katrina Sunset* by Tameka Norris, the artist is enacting an event that many of us watched from our televisions at home. We saw the graphic, startling photographs all over the internet and in publications. If our destructive fantasy, whether it leads to a new form of existence or not, flourishes within unknown parameters, challenges, and barely fathomable "demons", then a major traumatic event cannot function as fodder for future colonization of upheaval and apocalyptic scenarios except perhaps to imagine with greater detail (and fear). Ultimately, what we are seduced, paralyzed, released, and agitated by is the unknown, unseen end; an end that artists in this exhibition have attempted to illuminate with the guide of their individual fantasy.

**Mel Chin's Fundred Project**  
**University of Memphis PLA(I)N(E) Gallery**

Originally campaigned in 2009-2010, Mel Chin's socially active Fundred Project aims to clean lead-ridden areas in New Orleans that pose potential behavioral problems and learning disabilities. After creating fake one hundred dollar bills in coloring-book fashion and collecting the "fundreds", or fake hundreds, Chin then delivered the \$300,000,000 in "creative capitol" to Congress in 2010 to request its exchange into real dollars. The minted American money was then used to fund the lead-lead clean up. Chin is known for art that improves community environments, such as his *Revival Field* (1990) in St. Paul, Minnesota, which devised an ecological system to clean heavy metals from soil.

PLA(I)N(E)'s gallery space was shortened to create a small art-classroom setting with two long tables. Each equipped with blank Fundred notes and crayons, the potential energy of creation was the primary display. During the exhibition, several workshops were held with gallery committee members on site to facilitate the production of fundreds. The display was incredibly kid-friendly, hands-on, and included two videos to further explain the project to interested visitors. When the newly created custom, hand-drawn fundred was complete, instructions prompted it be hung on the wall upon one of two string clotheslines. A simple and well-executed display accurately reflected the *Fundred* goals and became an interactive version of the *Fundred* website. Ending on Sept. 21, the *Fundred* project at PLA(I)N(E) collected approximately \$1,000 of creative capitol; which will be sent to Chin for his next exchange of fundreds for hundreds.

The closing reception on Sept. 21 evidenced participatory efforts with fundred-filled clotheslines. At the beginning of the evening, the line was full. Upon finishing a note, it shared space with another note on a clothespin. The closing facilitated many conversations over coloring. Straightforward, educational and interactive, the focus of the gallery was transformed from contemplative contemporary art to a place of hands-on activity. The exhibit did not answer philosophical conundrums, solve existential problems, challenge color theory, or make more art that someone inevitably declared "has been done before". *Fundred* was the epitome of educational art activism.

After Chin's lecture at MCA last January, MCA's Catherine Wilson (Director of Art Education Programs) partnered with University of Memphis's PLA(I)N(E) Gallery to participate in Chin's ongoing Fundred Project. Though the initial leg of the project ended in 2010 with the delivery of armored fake cash, the project became an ongoing effort designed to insight participation of all ages. It meets curriculum requirements for school-aged children, allowing school art classes to utilize the project to involve primary and secondary students in the work of an internationally known contemporary artist. Much of Chin's work is participatory or collaborative. For the *Fundred* Project, Chin utilized not only the participation of any-aged color-ists, he also partnered with a bioenvironmental scientist at Tulane and an environmental health scientist at the University of Texas to develop the method behind removing the lead from NOLA soil. Rather than reusing the hyper-accumulating plants as in the *Revival Fields* project, the team developed a way to sprinkle an organic phosphate mineral on the contaminated soil to transform the lead into an insoluble phosphorus known as pyromorphite. The new insoluble substance would no longer be a part of the soil but a portion easily removed.

As tangible as the chunks of pyromorphite, the fundreds can still be made after the exhibition. Wilson is a point-person for Fundred drop-off in the regional area. She can be contacted at cwilson@mca.edu.

**For more information on Mel Chin's Fundred Dollar Bill Project:**  
**www.fundred.org**  
**melchin.com**  
**architectumagazine.com/architects/saint-march-in.aspx**



**Photo courtesy of Lester Merriweather and PLA(I)N(E) gallery.**

**M. Foster** is a graduate student of sculpture and art history at the University of Memphis.



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**A Legacy of Freedom: The Works and Lectures of Christo & Jeanne-Claude**

I've never seen Christo & Jeanne-Claude's in person. The only piece I would have had the remote possibility of seeing was in New York, February 2005. It lasted 16 days. In those wintry sixteen days that the *Gates* stood in Central Park, approximately four million new visitors and \$250 million in revenue for New York passed forth from the twenty-three miles of fabric.

Jeanne-Claude passed away in November 2009. To many, the *Gates* would appear to be the last project the artists worked on together, that passion now lost, but their history and planned works from the past would say otherwise. For starters, as Christo was quick to point out, "Jeanne-Claude always started by saying that we were born on the same day, the same month, and the same year of June 13, 1935 ... but from different mothers." It was in this union, and the works that followed from Christo's early wrappings to their environmental works, that their legacy and their freedom in love, art, and life began and persisted, even beyond death.

This legacy was present in both the exhibit at the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art (LRMA) in Laurel, and the evening lectures from Christo at LRMA and the University of Southern Mississippi's Bennett Auditorium – September 4th and 5th, respectively. The Exhibit, *Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Prints and Objects* – on display until October 6th, shared an exciting display of ninety lesser-known and visible works and objects from Christo's emergent years in Paris and New York up to 2007 – many as preparatory studies, models, and research for both realized and unrealized projects (of which there are 37). The Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, itself a tucked away treasure of Mississippi with exceptional works from Homer, Corot, the Hudson River School, and a generous offering of Ukiyo-e woodblock prints, was thankfully able to be a part of this travelling exhibition and bring Christo back to Mississippi (fabric for 1991's *Running Fence* was produced in Columbus) for these lectures – a practice in which he receives no honorarium.

The lectures at the LRMA and USM's auditorium were centered on his presently on-going projects – *Over the River (Project for Arkansas River)* and *The Mastaba (Project for Abu Dhabi)*, respectively conceived in 1992 and 1977. Trapezing back and forth between past works and current projects, relating past processions of political wrangling with the similar, present turmoil of *Over the River* was not only informative in the most minute details, but also amusing coming from his grand gestures and thick, Eastern-European accent. It was easy to relate to past artists and gallerists – Ray Johnson, Claes Oldenburg, Leo Castelli – who met Christo in the 60s when he spoke no English, and with Jeanne-Claude had just immigrated to New York, saw him committed to his art and were warmed by his friendly gestures and mannerisms. The format of both lectures included extensive question portions, with Christo standing on stage for another hour to thoroughly answer questions both thought provoking and redundant. Still, it was always just Christo standing there – starting with a remark about Jeanne-Claude, and often saying that she could answer questions so much more assertively. Christo, the poet of the two, was without his Callopo, and one could see this took an even greater toll than any bureaucratic difficulties did.

One of the most popular and repetitive questions for Christo, asked an amusing three times in various ways during the Wednesday lecture, has always been, "How do you fund your projects?". It's an easily answered question: he completes the studies and other preparatory collages in his studio; museums, collectors, and consultants come to look at the work; they like the work; they pay him money; they take the work. Christo and Jeanne-Claude do not take donations, grants, corporate sponsorship, or any outside backing for their projects – which after costs of materials, labor, fighting bureaucratic red tape, engineering research, and leasing or land payments amount into the millions of dollars. The most expensive project to date is the *The Umbrellas, Joint Project for Japan and USA*, 1991. This bold act of freedom and of courage to produce expensive, ephemeral works which occupy large areas of land – on different continents at times – and fighting over decades to have them realized, is the essence of Christo & Jeanne-Claude's shared spirit. As Christo remarked in both lectures, it is irrational to produce art and is useless, it adds nothing, but it is something he and his wife must do. However, it was in his comment, "I never give advice to younger artists, art is not a profession," where his insight into what art could mean to artists – going beyond the idea of Art for Art's sake and any Fluxus notion – that Christo actually gave advice to artists. It was reminiscent of a rule John Baldessari always gives to artists, Baldessari saying, "You have to be possessed, which is something you can't will." By not teaching, by not advising, by just doing and creating until death, Christo perhaps gave the most poignant lesson for artists to adhere to.

It is of course contrarian to posit such an idea as a rule for artists, because it is without those teachers and the academia of artists that Christo and many others would not garner so much recognition for their work and have the possibility of invitation to lecture. But, it is also that contrarian that never saw himself a member of the popular, present movements of Fluxus or the *Nouveaux Réalistes*, who instinctively didn't fit into the propaganda of Soviet-controlled Bulgaria, and who, in such an unassuming, almost diminutive stature, never once compromised his work at the discretion of others. It is that legacy of total freedom and of absolute courage in the presence of parliamentary leaders who opposed his wrapping of their Reichstag that is perhaps the greatest education and example for young artists. It is possibly this freedom and artistic autonomy that Christo and Jeanne-Claude embodied so fervently that will be the lasting inspiration and legacy of their work that will be impressed upon younger artists and their decisions in constructing their own life's work.



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Carrie Mae Weems. *Afro-Chic* (video still), 2010. DVD, 5 minutes, 30 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. © Carrie Mae Weems

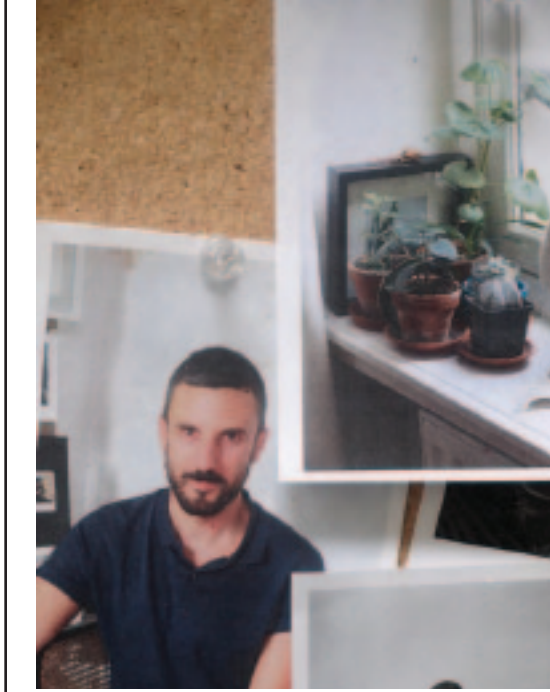
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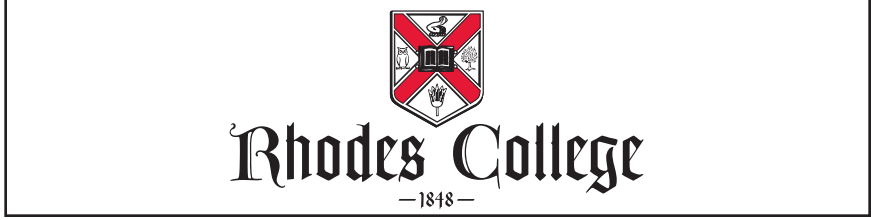
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