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PNCA and OCAC Announce Joint MFA in Applied Craft and Design

PORTLAND, OR - Building on over 200 collective years of art and design education, the city's two oldest art colleges — Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) and the Oregon College of Art and Craft (OCAC) — announce a joint MFA degree that fosters a new, forward-thinking model of art and design education. An historic moment, the creation of the joint MFA bolsters the cooperative and innovative efforts of these two growing institutions by creating a program that offers students opportunities for creative work that fuses craft, design and environmentalism within a rich academic and creative practice.

The new joint MFA in Applied Craft and Design celebrates process and tradition, innovation and cultural engagement and is the culmination of feasibility studies by an MFA Task Force consisting of OCAC and PNCA faculty members. The PNCA/OCAC MFA program will accept 15 students in the 2009-2010 school year.

“While there has long been a tradition of cooperation among cultural institutions in Portland, true collaboration is needed now more than ever,” said Tom Manley, PNCA President. “This program is a natural fit for Portland where there has always been a spirit of inventiveness and naturalism—which now we think of as sustainability. It will allow students to do their best thinking in a spirited environment that values DIY initiative.”

“The program has no bounds,” said Bonnie Laing-Malcomson, OCAC President. “Craft applications overlapping with design implementation will provide a forum for very creative problem solving.”

The governing boards and trustees of both PNCA and OCAC approved the dual degree program in early October after a year of collaboration on program criteria, curriculum development and research. The new partnership strengthens the relationship between OCAC, PNCA and their constituents and informs the mentor-based, collaborative program.

Students will pursue solutions to contemporary challenges — infused with social and environmental responsibility — through conceptual investigation and creative practice. Mentors vetted and approved by the Program Chair will work one-on-one with students to shape their work. The highly selective program is ideal for students seeking to inform a design practice and skill set with the knowledge of making.

“The program will succeed in Portland because we have major inroads to business, craft and design communities in the city, and those community connections are going to just enhance the program,” said Paul Platosh, Chair of the Communication Design department at PNCA. “There's just been this unholy division between the production and the design of the thing, and in a lot of ways I see this program as bringing those two things back together. When you bring the two together, you may not know what you're going to do, and I think that's an exciting aspect of the program, because you could surprise yourself.”

Craft and design will inform each other and intersect, with outcomes including entrepreneurial ventures, design careers, artistic practices, opportunities in higher education and other occupations that embrace creative problem solving.

"I think there's a lot of people that are hungry for this," said Karl Burkheimer, Wood Department Head at Oregon College of Art and Craft. "I think what people are looking for is to find a place for the objects that they make. There's a lot of room in this world for people to apply good thinking and good acts of making for the betterment of all."

Application deadline is February 2009.

About PNCA

Since its founding in 1909, Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) has become a leader in innovative educational programming that connects students to a global perspective in the visual arts. The College offers Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Communication Design, Illustration, Intermedia, General Fine Arts, Painting, Photography, Printmaking and Sculpture. In addition, the College offers a mentor-based MFA in Visual Studies that allows students to create a studio-centered curriculum to realize their personal artistic vision. PNCA has the oldest continuously running community arts education program in the Northwest. From its current base in the heart of the Pearl district, PNCA is actively involved in Portland's cultural programming through exhibitions and a vibrant public program of lectures and visiting artists from around the world. In connection with its Ford Institute for Visual Education (FIVE) the College most recently debuted the PNCA + FIVE Idea Studios featuring artists James Turrell and philosopher Jacques Rancière. Visit on-line for a full events calendar and to learn more about PNCA's BFA degree, MFA in Visual Studies or Continuing Education courses for all ages and skill levels.

About OCAC

For over one hundred years, Oregon College of Art and Craft has been dedicated to excellence in teaching art through craft, contributing significantly to the continuity of contemporary craft as an artistic expression. The College offers a four-year BFA in Crafts, two Certificate Programs and year-round studio classes and workshops for adults and children. Established in 1907, OCAC is nationally accredited through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

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