SEEN & HEARD

“When you do something that comes from your heart, it helps people understand your aesthetic so much more.”

— Katia Kuethe, Director of Creative Services at Kate Spade New York

“On Community Engagement

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SiTE:LAB emerged out of those early experiments and helped shape the mission of this volunteer-run contemporary art nonprofit that creates temporary site-specific art projects aimed at facilitating dynamic collaborations between the art, design, education, business, and cultural communities of Grand Rapids.

By engaging the community in meaningful ways, unexpected opportunities arise, unique relationships are formed, and you become an active participant in shaping the world around you.

Get engaged in your community—it’s where the action is!

— Paul Amenta, SiTE:LAB cofounder & curator

ON A MISSION

Kendall College of Art and Design (KCAD) has a simple mission: to develop artists and designers who make a difference, using art and design to make matters better. KCAD believes in impact. We choose to embrace the power, boldness, and courage required to create change. In that spirit, with this issue we are launching an app version of Portfolio that will be available in the App Store for the iPad. Let us know what you think: what should be kept, discarded, improved. And let us know if you have ideas or themes for our writers and artists to dig into. You can always reach us at kcadcommunications@ferris.edu.

ON THE COVER

KCAD alumna Rebecca Green (‘10, Illustration) created “Community Engagement” for the cover of this issue of Portfolio. Green is originally from Owosso, Mich. but eager to experience new faces and places, Green is on the move from Arizona to Denver, Colo. where she’ll live with Junie, an ornery, nearly-toothless cat, and Mori, a friendly white Chihuahua (with full dental functionality). Her work remains in place at myblankpaper.com. Green enjoys both commissioned and commercial projects, working primarily with acrylic and ink. Her dream job would be building a miniature set for a Wes Anderson stop-motion film. Locally, her work can be seen at LaFontsee Gallery.

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1. Rick DeVos, Founder, Start Garden

What obligations do community members have to each other? Why?

Each one of us has a moral obligation to the health and welfare of our community, and that includes being better food citizens. In the same way all politics is local, so is food. It is the responsibility of each of us to talk about health and nutrition and eating well in order to have a sustainable and growing community.

From the perspective of a food producer, that includes teaching people how the food we eat was produced, who made it, and how it came to our tables. Local food can bring us connection with land, land and community. The critical element to living in and around cities is trust and relationships to the food we eat. For decades we have treated food as a commodity, but at the local level it can be a connection to the earth and to each other.

Why is it important for your organization to be connected to the community? What obligations do community members have to each other? Why?

In a forward-looking civic society, we should be nurturing the young to be positive and proactive about the future. We should also be connected to and supportive of the experienced, learning from their lessons and weaving the past into the present and future. Those of us in the middle should work hard while we are in our prime to make the community a better place, and to build platforms for greater opportunities, equality, and the exchange of ideas.

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GRAM is both a cultural and a civic organization, and our vision is to build community strength and enhance the quality of life through art. We seek to convene community around art objects, creativity, and ideas, and use those meaningful art experiences for pleasure and learning that is relevant for people's lives. We also hope that GRAM attracts people to downtown Grand Rapids, to enjoy the many other great things that happen in this community. Finally, we play a key educational role, with programs including Pre-K schools and educators, colleges, families, adult learners, and Alzheimer's patients.

How do we build on these connections? What does the future look like? Communication, dialogue, and exchange — there is an incredible talent pool of optimistic, forward-focused people who are shaping other institutions, so I believe that the future is bright for our community.

Dana Fris-Hansen, Director and CEO, Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM)

What obligations do community members have to each other? Why?

I think of it more in terms of “opportunity” than “obligation.” We’re cooperative beings, and our desire for community comes from deep within us. So we have the opportunity to scratch that itch for connection and community by doing things to serve others, creating the places we want to live, and partnering with people to get cool things done.

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KCAD isn’t content to be an island of creativity in West Michigan. So for the past few years, it’s been steadily building bridges to other intriguing places in the community.

All of these connections give its faculty and students many new pathways to explore. They also bring fresh ideas into campus and raise awareness of what KCAD has done, is doing, and can do for the region.

**Design West Michigan**

Design West Michigan (DWM) was the brainchild of economic development organizations The Right Place and Lakeshore Advantage. “The idea was to find new ways to advance the economy in the region, and design was recognized as one of the strengths we could capitalize on to attract and retain talent,” explained Director John Berry. From its very first event, the organization inspired “palpable energy from a cross-discipline of designers,” said Berry. At that point, KCAD agreed to become one of DWM’s sustaining elements, and the organization is now housed in KCAD’s Woodbridge N. Ferris Building in downtown Grand Rapids.

Today, KCAD students are invited to join DWM and attend events where they can network with practicing professionals in all areas of design. They also have opportunities to serve as hosts or tour guides for out-of-town guests attending DWM functions, which gives the students a unique way to build valuable connections.

**Material ConneXion Library**

Right next door to DWM is the largest academic collection of samples from Material ConneXion, a global consultancy and library of innovative and sustainable materials. It recently added 500 new samples to its collection, bringing the total on display to well over 1,000 — with many more available through its database. Berry, who oversees the library, says, “Since it is the largest in the educational world, it puts KCAD on the radar and broadens awareness of the depth of design education going on here. Many who come to visit are especially intrigued with the BFA degree in Collaborative Design. The library is also helpful in recruiting since it demonstrates that the school is not insular, but expansive in its thinking.”

KCAD President Dr. David Rosen added, “We support the work of design and design innovation, and we want to provide a resource that otherwise would be absent. Hosting Material ConneXion gives our students an enormous advantage that few others have: they can see the future of design from the vantage point of the collection.”

Along with offering professional memberships to West Michigan’s business and creative community, DWM is teaming with local startup incubator Start Garden to offer a free one-year Material ConneXion membership to any entrepreneur who reaches its $20,000 funding level.

**West Michigan Apparel and Textile Board**

With KCAD’s Fashion Studies program barely one year old, Program Chair Lori Faulkner is already seeking ways to expand its reach. She’s been steadily gathering names of anyone with ties to the fashion and textile world, from local giants like Wolverine Worldwide and the furniture industry all the way to West Michigan designers who sell their goods on Etsy.

“I’m trying to connect people to form an organization that can work on creating a fashion incubator for Grand Rapids,” she said. While startup costs for fashion equipment are often prohibitive, an incubator would allow many people, including students and graduates of the Fashion Studies program, to share space and specialty equipment at a reasonable rate. “The idea is a cross-collaboration between industry, education, and the community, for a common good,” she explained. So far, response has been enthusiastic. “It’s exciting for people to realize there are so many others doing what they do, and that they might be able to find support for the fashion industry in Grand Rapids,” said Faulkner.

**TEDxGrand Rapids**

One year after TEDxGrand Rapids brought the innovative idea-sharing format of the original TED Talks to this community, it reached out to KCAD for support. “KCAD has said we want to continue on page 19.”
LEARNING OUTSIDE THE LINES

By Kevin Currinet

Once upon a time, academia was accessible only to an elite few. Pity the dark ages.

Today, KCAD is flinging its doors open and encouraging two-way traffic as students of all ages come in to learn, and faculty and students go out to create more learning opportunities throughout the community.

Equipping Kids for a Life with Art

During spring, summer; and fall sessions, children from 5 to 14 converge on KCAD’s campus to discover and hone their skills in everything from drawing to digital art and fashion studies. KCAD’s Youth and Adult Programs welcome the youngest members of our creative community and introduce new skills that can provide hours of pleasure, help boost emotional, social, and intellectual growth, and—who knows?—maybe even provide the stepping stones to creative careers.

Education has become an important part of ArtPrize, the annual art contest that draws hundreds of thousands of people to downtown Grand Rapids. In addition to sponsoring the event and hosting a major venue, KCAD’s art education department leverages its knowledge of creative learning to develop educational programs and packets for students and families attending the event.

The Grand Rapids Public Museum, Grand Rapids Public Schools and KCAD are collaborating on a three-year plan to create a Museum School. Known as “IMMERSE,” the program will blend the museum’s Grand History Lesson with human-centered design principles and placed-based education to offer compelling 21st century learning opportunities for the youth of our region. The first phase will be open to 21 fifth grade classes in the 2013/2014 school year.

As Grand Rapids Public Schools make plans for the new International Baccalaureate Arts Academy opening in 2014, KCAD Art Education Chair Donna St. John is sharing her considerable knowledge about engaging students through art from her place on the advisory board. When the school opens, it will provide a creative education to its own students, as well as serving as a lab where KCAD students can observe, do their own teaching, and get better results than they would just teaching a variety of media techniques.

In 2012, KCAD interior design students worked with culinary arts students at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) to design kitchens focused on a specific category of food. “My students were given outlines from the culinary students, and they developed themed designs around that food and the special equipment needed to prepare it,” said Lee Davis, Assistant Professor of Interior Design. “GRCC students learned how their work can be reflected in an environment, and my students gained a greater appreciation for everything that goes into designing a kitchen.”

Student teachers in the art education program are placed in a variety of settings throughout the Midwest, giving them a chance to share the cutting-edge brain science their program is known for. “What we teach them is really visionary,” says Donna St. John. “They use it to become leaders out in the community, helping other teachers who may not be aware of this research to go deeper, think about thinking, and get better results than they would just teaching a variety of media techniques.”

When Students Reach Out, Ideas Come In

KCAD art education students regularly volunteer at Kids Food Basket to pack sack suppers for children whose families experience food poverty. While the students enjoy giving back to the community, the experience also benefits them. Their department chair Donna St. John explained, “When our students recognize that there are children in our area going home with no food to eat, it broadens their perspectives. Any time you can take off your shoes and consider another person’s perspective, it makes you a stronger, better teacher.”

Lost April, a contest led by the Michigan Pure Wood Works Co-op gave KCAD students the opportunity to design furniture that represented “Pure Michigan.” Submissions needed to be manufacturable in Michigan, using materials from within the state. All of KCAD’s Furniture Design classes used the challenge as a class project, and 13 students entered the contest. A panel of outside judges chose four finalists, who will work with the Co-op to have their collections produced and presented at a Michigan furniture market. Production of the top three designs began this summer, and the Pure Michigan Furniture line will be available in Michigan stores in the fall of 2013.

Keeping the Creative Juices Flowing

KCAD’s Continuing Studies program offers ongoing classes for any adult interested in exploring or developing their artistic abilities. Subjects range from drawing, painting, and photography to interior design and fiber art. Director Brenda Sipe says the program is also seeking ways to work with recently retired people or seniors, possibly in their own settings.

“Studies have proven that for adults, keeping the brain active and engaged is a positive thing,” she said.

Starting this summer, KCAD’s Continuing Studies program is offering classes that count toward the 500 clock hours of professional development K-12 educators are required to earn every three years. Sipe expects KCAD’s offerings to appeal to many educators, especially in districts where art teachers have been eliminated by budget cuts and classroom teachers are expected to teach subjects outside of their own specialties.

The Continuing Studies program teams with businesses and community organizations on a regular basis to enrich creative learning for people of all ages. Past partners have included Dematic, Herman Miller, Steelcase, John Baas Zoo, West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT), scout troops, libraries, and the Muskegon Museum of Art.

An ongoing exploration between KCAD’s Collaborative Design Program and the Grand Rapids Public Museum has provided a series of unique opportunities to engage the general public in creative learning at its former site on 54 Jefferson. Highlights include artFromSR project: After starting to catalog the museum’s vast collection of artifacts, students in DeBruyn’s collaborative design classes suggested building a more robust database to improve public access to the collection. They created artifactorg, a website where people from the community can write their own histories of the artifacts to demonstrate how others might connect to or learn from them. The results have been assembled into a print-on-demand book, where they continue to prove fresh thinking about these connections to the past.

Chairmanship: Students used the former museum as a demonstration space where they could test their exhibit systems from a user experience point of view. They displayed George Beylerian’s miniature chairs in individual cases inside the museum during a SiTE:LAB Workflow exhibit, when the building was packed with a large, creative-minded crowd. “That’s something you can’t do in a small gallery,” said DeBruyn. “There was a huge and diverse audience, and it gave our students the chance to pilot an idea in front of a very engaged group of people.”

Limiting access to education is an old-school idea. No matter who you are, what stage of your career you’re in, or even what industry you’re in, KCAD is ripe with opportunities to engage in creative learning...
We are all interconnected in this world and my patterned works explore that concept. Cause and effect—each line that I place on the paper leads to another and another, until everything comes together.

Borkowski is a 2009 graduate of the Drawing program.
“What are you going to do with an art degree?” the question goes. 
Oh, how about change the world? 

A group of students, alumni, and instructors from KCAD are doing just that, using what they know to uplift and empower people worldwide.

Lisa Ambrose gave seriously ill children a reason to smile. Ambrose, an adjunct instructor at KCAD, teamed with Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital last spring to create a special event linking her senior illustration students with children undergoing treatment.

Ambrose said, “When you’ve got kids who are dealing with difficult things, it’s nice to give them something else to think about. Children are so dealing with difficult things, it’s nice to give them something else to think about. Children are so

When Ambrose’s initiative and the students’ time and talents made the hospital a positively wonderful place to be. Amanda Cammer and Hunter Bridwell are revitalizing their neighborhood. Cammer is still in school, pursuing her MFA. Bridwell has a day job as a photo assistant. But this KCAD student and alumns found room in their schedules to create a stronger community by founding Craft House, a collaborative exhibition space and artist resource center on South Division in Grand Rapids.

“Revitalization was our original goal,” said Bridwell. “I know this neighborhood very well and feel at home here, but for a long time, it was in a pretty rough place. I could see that the more storefronts that were filled and functioning with regular hours, the better it would be, and Amanda and I wanted to be part of that.”

Armed with a knowledge of photography, experience running a gallery in college, and a huge network of emerging artists, Cammer and Bridwell realized they could support their neighborhood and the creative community all at once. They opened Craft House in Fall 2012, offering gallery space, open critiques, portfolio reviews, photography classes, and Grand Rapids’ only darkroom for rent. On any given day or night, art and a community of artists are being created inside Craft House, while a healthier and more vibrant neighborhood is being created outside.

Many of the children had endured long illnesses and months of treatment at the hospital. But that sunny spring night, Ambrose’s initiative and the students’ time and talents made the hospital a positively wonderful place to be.

Anne Norcross is helping kids learn from the hospital. As an associate professor of art history at KCAD, Norcross has a thing for the past. And she’s found a creative way to help that interest rub off.

For the past two years, she’s been volunteering at an Eaton Rapids charter school to help students understand history through art. "Art gives them another way to connect to culture," she says. "I use it as a catalyst to get them to think about history, culture, religion, and society. It opens things up much better than simply reading a textbook and doing a worksheet."

Working with the classroom teacher and state-mandated grade level expectations, she ties lessons into the art of each major time period. "For example, I may assign a scavenger hunt where they look for examples of Greek architecture," she says. "Students come back with photos of buildings and even CD covers. It helps them engage with art from a historical aspect they don’t otherwise get in school."

Norcross is currently in talks to expand her program to the entire Eaton Rapids public school system, where she would prepare students for their annual 8th grade trip to Washington, D.C. "They visit the Capitol rotunda, which is filled with art tied to the history and politics of the country. I’d love to go in and present to them before that trip so they could have a more complete understanding of what they’re about to see," she said.

Tracy Van Duinen is helping at-risk kids forge stronger communities. KCAD alum Tracy Van Duinen, the artist behind the murals on the Grand Rapids Children’s Museum and WMCR, is an art educator in Chicago classrooms. But even when school is out, you’ll find him surrounded by kids, creating art on the city’s underpasses.

“I work with at-risk, high-need kids and am always looking for ways to engage them and have them take ownership of the content of classes,” he said. While studying education in Chicago, Van Duinen met an instructor who was a muralist with a public art group. “I started working with them and saw it as a way to do something unique with my class,” he said. “Instead of tagging at the school, they’re putting murals up.”

He began by hiring 10 kids to create summer art projects through the mayor’s Gallery 37 program. Today, he’s working on giant murals for underpasses below Lakeshore Drive, often taking six to eight weeks to complete. The projects are entirely run by the surrounding community. “The idea, content, and making of the pieces all come from the people who live there. I’m just the facilitator,” said Van Duinen.

Anyone in the neighborhood is welcome to help, and the projects often unite people from diverse cultures, ranging from poverty to upscale townhouses. “Where before, these same people might cross the street to avoid each other, now they work as a whole to beautify their community, spending time together, conversing, and hopefully becoming more trusting,” he says.

Shelley Stevens is giving KCAD students the luxury of time. Shelley Stevens describes herself as a loyal alumnus who earned both her BFA and MFA from KCAD. “When I was a grad student,” she said, “I was juggling raising children, commuting enormous distances, and working toward my own golden apple, that goal each of us has inside of us. It occurred to me then that it would be so nice to go somewhere for an extended period of time and do nothing but work on my own art.”

Five years ago, she and her husband built a place to do just that—the Golden Apple Art Residency on the Atlantic Ocean in rural Maine. Every summer, they open their cottages to artists and writers, giving them the time and space to work on their art without distractions.

Stevens reserves two of those spots especially for KCAD, which offers full scholarships for MFA students based on a competitive application. While in Maine, the students mingle with creative people from all over the country, forging connections with more established artists.

“Those with long careers can interact with those who are very fresh,” she said. “It’s an opportunity for all of them to gain a lot of wisdom and have a wonderful exchange of ideas.”

“I feel very privileged to be able to do this,” she says. “My entire undergraduate experience at KCAD was my first golden apple. The residency lets me share that experience with other artists. It’s very much a give back to the community that had such an impact on me.”

Dwayne Szot is inspiring people of all abilities to make art. KCAD alum Dwayne Szot grew up with a foster father who liked to use tools and a foster sister with cerebral palsy. “I remember trying to carry her or pull her in a wagon to the bus stop, but we were always late,” he said. “That triggered something in me that made me want to start creating machines to help people with disabilities.” His lifelong fascination inspired a dream to create the world’s first painting wheelchair, and a grant from the NEA allowed him to achieve that goal.

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MAKE ART/MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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“That first project has grown into creating tools that provide a creative experience for people of all abilities,” he said. These include the Art Roller that turns a wheelchair into a huge paintbrush, the Chalk Drawer that lets people in wheelchairs draw on the sidewalk, and Pogo Paint Poles for decorating walls. “My tools are designed to let all people paint, learn, and be together,” he explained.

Szot provides an online catalog of tools and organizes creative programs across the U.S., Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. “My work is not about trying to get my name in a gallery;” he said. “It’s always about what I could do that’s going to make a difference. Companies like Dick Blick and Croyola are not going to do what I do. They want to sell a million units. My content to create this new art form that can reach and change lives.”

Feeling inspired? Look around. Your community is your canvas, and there’s no limit to what you can do.

Clockwise, from far left: A young cancer patient and his mother pose with a portrait painted by an illustration student; Artistic cottages along the coast at Golden Apple Art Residency; Tracy Van Duinen at work; Friday fonos with a cardboard box on a bus stop, in Kansas City; Children in Saudi Arabia have fun with sports; rvJanet. Bridwell and a student working on the Metaphorest Project; An artist at work at Golden Apple Art Residency

By Karin Lannon

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By Karin Lannon
Kim Dabbs is the Executive Director of West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT), and is taking a leadership role in changing the employment landscape, both locally and statewide. She worked in the Detroit area for nearly a decade after receiving an Art History degree from KCAD, and recently moved her family back to Grand Rapids to become an essential part of the community.

What is it about community engagement that is so important to you? I believe it’s the only way to affect systemic change in many of our communities. Whether it’s with children or adults, working directly with individuals to help them learn job skills in order to gain a greater perspective on the world through the prism of art—it makes all the difference in the world.

Is that what you are doing in your current position at WMCAT? Every day. We have arts programs for teens, in which we do everything from introduce arts to young people who have never had exposure to them, or hone the skills of those who have already demonstrated artistic talent. This provides them with college and career pathways, and on the adult side, we have a nine month program that provides training and job skills. This creates new careers in a wide variety of fields and removes barriers to opportunity for hundreds of West Michigan area adults. Our average medical technology adult learners are unemployed and receiving government assistance, and without WMCAT, the future wouldn’t be as bright for them.

What is it about this organization and this area that made you decide to move back to West Michigan? The collaborative nature. Everyone here is in it together. From the students to the instructors to the board and the donors, everyone here has the same goal and an outstanding commitment. We also get to work directly with area healthcare agencies, whose leaders serve on our advisory board. This helps ensure that we are providing the right type and level of training. Also, our alliance within a national network provides more opportunities to take our success stories and apply them to chapters all over the country.

Do you have a favorite success story from your first nine months on this job? We have a student named Jason who was a senior this year and has high-functioning autism. When he entered the program as a freshman, he had zero experience with the visual arts. Over his four years with us, he discovered a passion for photography, and found his voice through his art. During his senior year, he was the only student from the GRPS to win both a national and regional Silver Key award, a prestigious and highly covered prize presented by The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Not only was I incredibly proud of Jason’s achievements and happy for him and his family, I was moved beyond words when the employees at WMCAT raised enough money to fund a trip for Jason and his mom to receive his award at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

Well, I guess that’s why they call this discipline the ‘humanities’ isn’t it? Is there anything more important than that? I think it is.
Michigan Department of Education. Morrison will be selected to be one of the
Kristen Morrison reported on KCAD’s involvement with the
Automatic Photographers: They’ve be playing a key role of growing the next generation sustainability titles in West Michigan, has been named
Jon Moroney of the Medical Illustration Program, juried the Lowell
gallery is owned and operated by photography graduate
Clusterf**k show held at the Craft House Gallery. The
now southeastern Nigeria) in Calabar, Nigeria, at the
Ekpe/Mgbe Nsibidi Matrix, an overview of his research and fieldwork into masquerade culture and Nsibidi (a system of symbols indigenous to what is now southwestern Nigeria) in Calabar, Nigeria, at the

Brenda Sipe, director of the Art History program, selected the solo exhibitions of
of the dual cultural exchange program at the

Brandon Beilke (’01, Drawing), drawing his video impression, a response to the natural movements of
of the Videoformes festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France, the Animé Art Fair festival, and the urban Institute for Contemporary Art (UICA) in Grand Rapids.

Emily Bloccer (’11, Drawing) was painting a solo show of Muslim Sigel Fine Art Center in Byron Center, Michigan. Emily gave a lecture on her work in February.

All Cavanaugh (’09) was published in the New York Times for her watercolor illustration of
Vera Gergely, a Costa Rican-born singer, who died in 2008 at age 93.

Deven Doevas (’09) is publishing his third book titled The Red Hair Torrent Yew. Devenoza, along with KCAD alumni James Sipe (’09—now working on the Disney Gravity Falls Cartoon) and Ben Collens (’10), engaged Kickstarter, a crowd where creators and backers can collaborate to make projects happen. Kickstarter enabled the alumni to earn funding for the project within the first week of presentation. The trio also has employed the help of Andy Ristaino, lead character designer of the Adventure Time cartoon. DEVS1 album artist KIV Bylins, and comic legend Rich Gill, with the project.

In 2007, Joshua Ellingen (’09, Visual Communication) was chosen to be part of the first ever art exhibition in space aboard the International Space Station. The effort was part of space entrepreneur Richard Garriott’s mission to the station.

Ellingen’s space flight is to display the art of the Space Program, a portrait of bioluminescent fish (dry fish), took the trip into space. The artwork was auctioned off for charity to benefit

Alex Gillis (’13, Illustration and Art History) joined the First Institute of Arts’ Education Department, in October through November of 2011, Gillis completed a six-week International Artist-in-Residence program with the Arquitectura. Gillis’s residency comprised of six weeks in Puebla. M.H., studying Spanish Colonial painting techniques with a conservator, and three weeks in Oaxaca, Mexico, studying natural dyes indigenous to the region with a weaver from Tenodil del Valle. Gillis’s painting, Maching, Steel, won Best of Show in the 2013 Art of Edge exhibition at the Groove Poate Center.

Cory Peake (’09, Fine Art) recently held two simultaneous solo exhibitions of his work at Saranac Art Projects in Spokane, Wash., and the Shewan Gallery at Whitman College. The Shewan Gallery also served as a juried show for the 2013 National College Annual Regional High School Art Competition.

Jeffrey Hogan (’86), illustrator and published his new book, Zero Point, a philosophical fiction novel narrated by the main character of an ordinaire with an extraordinary outlook on life, who is haunted into an incredible journey based on an unusual inspiration.

Thessa Heghehe (’89, Interior Design) is now a Michigan-bred promoter eating locally. Her Blog, www.eatlocalfood.com, and Facebook page,
mostly catered to educating locavore—especially Michigan locavores—on how to find, prepare, eat, preserve, and enjoy local food.

James Arnold, director of the Rebecca Randall Bryan Art Gallery at Coastal Carolina University, Conway, S.C., won the $15,000 grand prize at ARField, a juried art competition and festival held in Lake City, S.C., from April 26-28, 2013. Arnold’s winning entry was a piece titled Jitterbug, completely made from a cut denim fabric.

Brandon Beilke (’01, Drawing) presented his video impression, a response to the natural movements of wet media, at the Videoformes festival in Clermont-Ferrand, France, the Animé Art Fair festival, and the urban Institute for Contemporary Art (UICA) in Grand Rapids.

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How do we build on these connections? What does the future look like?

Change can be a frightening thing. Yet, that is where the opportunity lies.

For us, then, it is really working to make the GRPM as public, if not more public, than it has been before. ArtPrize has opened the doors to see what we have, where we have been, and asking the public to do what the public did when the museum was founded, which is to chart, collectively, its future.

And so all this takes us right back to the questions above about why we must do as a community. So, I suppose the real answer is because it brings out the best in all of us.

Teresa Weatherall Neal, Superintendent, Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS)

What obligations do community members have to each other? Why?

This is actually a very tough question. I will start with a reference to Plato's Republic. The core question in Plato's Republic is determining the structure for a just society. The dialogue on the issue at hand could not possibly be conducted in a place of exclusivity, high mindedness, and self-righteousness, so Socrates went to Piraeus. His choice of a seaport meant that

he went to a place that pretty much encapsulated all of the challenges, needs, wants, issues, and motivations of the best and worst of us. Today we might call that getting context. And it is from that context that I argue the obligations the community members have to have to one another.

What then are our obligations? Thinking back to the Piraeus, I believe it is to understand the community as it is and to do so without judgment. Our work is to contribute to the establishment and maintenance of a community that serves its citizens, allows choices to be made, presents pathways to pursue higher and noble things, and creates a commrere of success that in turn enriches the individual and the greater good.

Why is it important for your organization to be connected to the community?

This question is much easier. For the GRPM, the answer is right in the very DNA of its origins. The key word here is public. The GRPM is, and has been for nearly all of its 132 years, a publicly owned institution. What does this mean? It means that the City of Grand Rapids holds legal title to all museum land, buildings, and collections (the artifacts and specimens we house and display). Therefore, the museum truly belongs to the public. The institution exists to serve the public and was built by the public.

In fact, nearly everything in the museum’s vast (over a quarter million artifacts) collections were donated by our citizens to be used for the public good. Why? Because it brings out the best in all of us.

In fact, nearly everything in the museum’s vast (over a quarter million artifacts) collections were donated by our citizens to be used for the public good. Why? Because it brings out the best in all of us.

We have a moral and civic obligation as community members to actively and intentionally work together to achieve common goals and ensure we are building a better future for the next generation. We need to step outside of our comfort zones — let go of the politics, turf, and special interests — and work together to ensure maximum collective impact for the betterment of our community.

Why is it important for your organization to be connected to the community?

GRPS belongs to the community. We exist to serve the community. We exist because of the parents and families who have entrusted us with their children. We are funded by the taxpaying community both locally and statewide. While our core business is teaching and learning, and our top customers are our students and parents, our role in the community goes beyond that from a community development, workforce development, and economic development standpoint. As one of the largest employers in West Michigan, as a large educational institution developing the next generation of talent for the workforce, and as one of the largest landowners in the City of Grand Rapids with facilities in nearly every corner of the city, we have a major impact on our community.

This is why it is so important that we build relationships with all the communities we serve and really work to open our doors, remove barriers, and be as engaged and as transparent as possible with the community.

How do we build on these connections? What does the future look like?

First and foremost, in order to be a good community partner and to effectively engage with community, you have to know your community and all the stakeholders involved. I believe one of the keys to effective community engagement is in knowing the who and how to connect with them. Start with building a database, and then intentionally work to build relationships and open up communications.

The GRPS Transformation Plan and how we actively engaged the community in that process, I believe, is a glimpse of what the future looks like. We are transforming how we function as an organization — tearing down the old, institutional, top-down bureaucratic ways, placing real emphasis on customer service, and opening ourselves back up to the community. For far too long, we have functioned in a manner that was disconnected with our community. Our Board of Education, district leaders, and school-based staff know that in order for our district to grow and thrive, we need to be better connected with our students — we need to be better, more engaged community partners. ❅

Bringing It All Together

Continues from page 1

important or interesting region and focus on what it means to be design-centric,” said Collaborative Design Program Chair Gayle DeBruyn. “Anytime something comes to Grand Rapids that speaks to design and fine art, we want to contribute any way we can. The T and the D of TED, technology and design, are at the core of what we’re delivering to students.”

As a supporter of the event, KCAD hosts labs and lunches, giving students opportunities to be involved in event planning and graphic design communications. “We also had many students who applied and who accepted into the audiences,” said DeBruyn. “For them, going to professional conferences adds validity to the things we talk about in class. For faculty members who attend, it’s a source of fresh thinking to help us keep our curriculum current.”

GR Film Festival

When two smaller festivals combined into the Grand Rapids Film Festival this year, Digital Media instructor Brad Yarhouse immediately sought out ways for KCAD students to get connected. “We’re always looking for opportunities for students to build exposure and find a place in the market outside of the classroom culture,” he said.

After Yarhouse reached out to festival director Jon Stanley at the Narrative to find out how they could create a PSA for the festival. “Jon came in and talked to the class, and we brainstormed some ideas and a concept.” This concept did everything from conceiving to creating art we, animating, and doing sound and music in 6 weeks of class.

KCAD students also teamed with Trivica Flashpoint Media Academy in Chicago. “One of their instructors was from West Michigan and wanted his students to be involved in the festival,” said Yarhouse. The Trivica students wrote PSA scripts and handed them off to students at KCAD, DeVos, Calvin, and Compass, who prepared the storyboards for filming.

During the festival, KCAD’s Woodbridge N. Ferris Building was also put to use as the setting for a production workshop. Digital Media instructor Kasey McCargar said, “It’s such a wonderful space, so KCAD went to bring people in and show it off to the film community.”

ArtPrize

After serving as an ArtPrize venue and sponsor for this annual art event, KCAD has decided to sponsor the contest’s $150,000 juried Grand Prize and remain an Exhibition Center through 2017. Dr. Rosen explained, “As Rick DeVos says so well, ArtPrize nurtures the ecology of creativity. That is the ecosystem KCAD lives in. If it is rich in nutriment, we prosper. If it breaks down, we die.”

“This commitment also raises awareness of the College as a Premier Leadership Sponsor, extending its presence to the hundreds of thousands of people from the community and around the world who participate in ArtPrize.

Midwest UX Conference

For Midwest UX Co-Chairs Grant Carmichael, Laurel Stanfill and Sam Bowles, connections with KCAD run deep. “They’ve supported many of the interesting, creative events in the city we’ve been part of, like TEDx and ArtPrize. That’s why we asked them to join us at a Midwest UX venue,” said Stanfill, a recent KCAD grad.

Now in its 13th year, the user experience conference is expected to attract 4,000 attendees to Grand Rapids, which is hosting the event for the first time this October. During a previous conference, Stanfill says, “People were impressed with how much presence GR had. They asked us to make a bid to host the event, and we won it!”

During the conference, the UIC will host the keynote speakers and/or present a panel. KCAD is also sponsoring a Midwest UX Scholar contest to support students interested in the conference. The co-chairs of the event, along with representatives from KCAD, will select five students to receive free tickets to the event. “We want it to be open to the entire student body because we believe student experience can affect any discipline,” said Carmichael.

From October 17-19, information architects, developers, interactive designers, graphic designers, and people who need websites will be converging on the city, ready to see what West Michigan — and KCAD — has to offer. “Companies are warming up to the fact that they need this talent,” said Carmichael. “We’re raising awareness about what we have here.”

Asian/ American Collaborative

Five years ago, KCAD went recruiting trip to Asia. “We wanted to raise the competition at KCAD and bring in some new ideas and different perspectives,” said David Du, Director of International Student Services. When Asian enrollment numbers began to rise, Du recognized the need to support these students. “We can help with everything from language and culture to opening a bank account, picking them up from the airport, and connecting with students and faculty,” he said. This support has led to a 500 percent satisfaction rate among Asian students and their parents — and a new effort to partner with Asian schools.

When Du and Art Education Chair Cindy Todd scheduled art shows in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou last year, hundreds of students, parents, and even embassy representatives showed up. “It’s such a wonderful way to approach KCAD about planning a combined art show in the U.S. Last May, KCAD hosted an international art show featuring works from 63 Asia art schools and so Michigan high schools. The goal was to learn from each other’s experiences and different approaches to high school art education. In addition to the show, the visiting teachers took part in a workshop, with both Asian and Michigan teachers demonstrating their classroom methods. Todd also traveled to China with Du, where she taught at three different high schools and spent time observing how Chinese students approach art.

“There’s no one answer for education,” said Du. “For example, repetition is not common here, but in China, students may repeat one thing many times to become very good at it. It’s not about who is better, but how we can learn from each other and become better at communicating. That’s why we’re interested in collaborating.”

From its home in the center of Grand Rapids, KCAD is reaching out in every direction to create a wide network that enriches all who take part. “We’re here, so the community has a creative event or community nearby (or even overseas), there’s a connection to KCAD — or likely will be soon.”
HOMEWORK:
BUILD NEW COMMUNITY WITH OLD SPACES  Paul Amenta

INTRODUCTION
In 1940, after years of storing and exhibiting its collection in borrowed or repurposed spaces, the Grand Rapids Public Museum moved into 54 Jefferson, a 30,000 square foot facility, one of the last projects to be funded under the W.P.A. during the Great Depression. Over the next fifty years, 54 Jefferson, with a whale skeleton suspended in its great hall, and mammal dioramas and displays of rocks and minerals, taxidermied birds and other natural history specimens in the adjoining galleries, was visited by nearly every schoolchild in Grand Rapids. In 1994, faced with the deteriorating condition of the building and changing museum standards, the museum relocated to a new facility, leaving dioramas, showcases and exhibits behind. Since that time, 54 Jefferson has been maintained by the museum and the city of Grand Rapids, but has otherwise been largely closed to the public.

Beginning in 2010, the Grand Rapids Public Museum has collaborated with SI TE:LAB, a non-profit that conducts art exhibitions in vacant buildings, on a series of projects in 54 Jefferson. Allowing the public—and particularly those who still remember the space from grade school field trips—to again enter the space has fostered renewed interest in the future of this iconic building. SI TE:LAB is hoping to use that attention to initiate a community-driven reexamination of the building’s potential as a public space, and as a first step in that process, has conducted an ideas competition.

THE CHALLENGE
We challenged competitors to create compelling visions for the future of this former museum. While every proposal may not have been feasible in light of the political, legal and financial obstacles facing the development of any new urban public space, each raised the community’s awareness of the unique potential of 54 Jefferson to serve Grand Rapids in new and innovative ways.

ASSIGNMENT
Look for the submissions and winners on display during ArtPrize at SI TE:LAB, and add your voice to the conversation on how our old buildings can be vital to creating community. For more information, visit 54Jeff.org.

Then join KCAD on Sept. 6 for “The Courthouse is Now in Session: Shaping Livable Cities—Community Connection,” a powerful panel discussion on the role of historic buildings in revitalizing downtowns. Information at kcad.edu/events/courthouse.