A LOOK AT THE NEW FILM CENTRE

BACK TO SCHOOL

MPS IN UX

LESLIE KING-HAMMOND GRADUATE AWARD

A CONVERSATION WITH ELLEN LUPTON

CENTER FOR SOCIAL DESIGN

LAB AWARD WINNERS
WELCOME TO

COMMOTION

kəˈmɒʃ(ə)n/

Noun

A STATE OF CONFUSED AND NOISY DISTURBANCE.

We’re pleased to share our first issue of Commotion, a magazine produced twice each year to share ideas, news, and of course, art—all that emerge from the 19 graduate programs here at MICA. The name Commotion comes from our belief that artists and designers create by a process of exploration, an investigative method that by its nature can be chaotic, noisy, and sometimes uncomfortable. The best work often starts with sparring ideas, a creative mind that is deliberating multiple media and solutions, and, even a state of confusion. Sometimes, artists embrace this tumult, intentionally disrupting the expected to bring attention to new ideas or to begin conversations. Sometimes, designers are deliberately brought to situations to rethink and disrupt in order to energize.

THE COMMOTION THEY CREATE CAUSES US TO PAY ATTENTION, AND WE HOPE YOU’LL PAY ATTENTION TO THE PAGES AHEAD.

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS—WRITE US AT COMMOTION@MICA.EDU, AND FOLLOW US AT @MICACOMMOTION.
MAKING BALTIMORE F I L C I T Y
Taura Musgrove '17, a member of the newly launched MFA in Filmmaking's inaugural class, knows something about making films. The Baltimore native has spent the past several years working on the craft—as a member of a film collective based in Oakland and as a production manager and associate producer in the home entertainment documentary division at Pixar. The first short film she co-produced, *One Weekend a Month*, won an honorable mention award for Best Short Film at the Sundance Film Festival in 2005. Last year at Pixar, she worked with their documentary team to create behind-the-scenes content for the movie *Inside Out*, several marketing videos for upcoming films, and educational videos for a museum exhibit about the math and science that go into all of the studio's films. When she decided she was “ready to take the leap” into graduate school, it was that depth of her experience in the industry that led her to MICA. Musgrove knew that she had a talent for filmmaking, especially the administrative component of the process. What she wanted to concentrate on was telling stories that spoke to her on a personal level; and she knew, from her history working with a traditional movie studio, that her voice as a filmmaker would require a different model. As Musgrove explained, “I worked with a studio, and while they were making some effort in diversifying content, I longed to see even more. Further, one of the things that struck me about MICA’s program was [program director] Patrick Wright’s commitment to honing in on new distribution models for film. In this digital age, filmmakers don’t have to create everything in Hollywood.” That ‘new ways of doing things’ is the foundation the MFA in Filmmaking was built upon. Announced in August 2014, MICA’s newest MFA program doesn’t just acknowledge the technology-driven changes in the film and media industry, it embraces them. “Technology has changed how films are made and delivered. Understanding and learning to take advantage of how these changes impact the business of filmmaking is what makes our program different,” explained Wright. “Our students learn the whole package of making a film, from pre- to post-production, but they are also learning how to sustain an independent production using new tools—using social media to build an audience, using new digital devices to distribute their work. They don’t have to be based out of Los Angeles or New York to make films. They can work anywhere.” Including Baltimore. Especially Baltimore now.
The launch of the graduate filmmaking program is part of a larger initiative that includes the breathtaking renovation of the building that housed the historic Centre Theatre in Baltimore’s Station North Arts and Entertainment District and unique partnerships with both Johns Hopkins University (JHU) and the Maryland Film Festival. The entire effort illustrates that MICA is not thinking small. Instead, the College is committed to creating an international film hub in Baltimore by helping bring the region’s best resources together.

One of the most important steps in turning Baltimore into a filmmaking center is the JHU-MICA Film Centre, which was a moss-covered shell whose roof was riddled with holes when work began on its overhaul in 2012. Today, it is the base of a partnership between MICA and JHU, where students in film programs from both institutions share space, courses, faculty, and equipment, and form a collective network that capitalizes on each other’s complementary strengths.

The Centre also houses the Baltimore Jewelry Center and the multiplayer game company Sparkypants Studios. Restored to its original exterior elegance, it is now one of the highlights of the burgeoning Station North neighborhood. The change in its interior has been remarkable. “They were still renovating when I was looking at grad schools. When I took a tour of the Film Centre, I had to wear a hard hat. You could see the sky from inside,” Michael Smiegel ’17 recounted. “I had to use my imagination about what it would look like; but everything they said it would look like is pretty much true. I’ve studied film at two other colleges—at a community college, where we had a few classrooms in the basement, and as an undergraduate we shared a floor with other arts programs. Here, there’s space that’s just for film. You know that every single person around you has the exact same reason for being there as you.”
Musgrove added, “When I saw the new MICA/JHU Film Centre, I was excited and encouraged by this major investment in local filmmaking. This newly designed space is a one-stop shop with state-of-the-art equipment, studios, editing suites, and a brand new sound stage. In addition to the huge investment in equipment and space, the Film Centre also has a great faculty.”

MICA and JHU share the second floor of the Film Centre, and it is stunning, with a contemporary design that juxtaposes bold colors with a spare, elegant use of space. More important than the visual impact of the space are the physical tools, and those are state of the art. They include: a 49-seat screening room, which can present both digital video and 16mm films; a 600-square-foot sound recording studio, and a smaller recording booth for vocal dubbing and foley mixing; a 2,000-square-foot cyclorama green room sound stage, which is large enough to accommodate set building and studio shooting; a film room, which houses a 16mm Steenbeck film editing table; dedicated individual high-definition editing suites; a computer room with 20 Macs; and classroom and lounge space that facilitates deeper interaction among students from both institutions. There is also an equipment cage to house gear that supports the Centre’s academic programming. Students have access to lights, microphones, tripods, dollies, and more than 40 camera packages, which range from Super 16mm to the latest 4K High Definition format; cameras include Arri Amira, Sony FS7, Sony NEX 700, Canon 300, Canon 100, and Canon 5D.
The entire effort illustrates that MICA is not thinking small. Instead, the College is committed to creating an international film hub in Baltimore by helping bring the region’s best resources together.
MICA’s students are already taking note of the benefits the partnership with JHU brings, listing among the advantages the chance to work with students with a wide array of viewpoints and expertise—including the unique ability to work with music students from JHU’s Peabody Institute on scoring films.

“It’s great that the programs are together,” Janique Robillard ’17 explained. “It augments our resources, such as our physical space and equipment, but perspectives and experience, as well. I don’t notice the presence of the JHU students because we are all in the program together, so it is also a seamless relationship.”

Wright added that filmmaking students also benefit from the program’s strong ties to the Maryland Film Festival, which is currently renovating the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Parkway Film Center. The Parkway, which will have three screens and around 600 seats, is located steps away from the JHU-MICA Film Centre. “The partnership with the Maryland Film Festival along with the curricular integration with JHU are key to the MFA program,” Wright said. “With the opening of the Film Centre and the restoration of the Parkway Theatre, we’re reinvigorating the area, bringing cinema back to this location, and making it an international hub.”

MICA is currently hosting a number of public screenings as part of their year-round collaboration with the festival, with filmmakers conducting master classes with MFA students. Some of those filmmakers include: Britni West, whose film, Tired Moonlight, took home the jury award for narrative feature at Slamdance 2015; Michael Nichols and Christopher Walker, whose 2015 documentary, Welcome to Leith, chronicles the white supremacist takeover of a small North Dakota town; and Alex Ross Perry, a noted independent narrative filmmaker who was recently hired by Walt Disney Studios to write a live-action adaptation of the Winnie the Pooh franchise.

Jed Dietz, director of the Maryland Film Festival, is passionate about the convergence of film-centered activity happening in Station North. “The creation of the Film Centre and our location in the Parkway Film Center fits each organization’s mission so beautifully. The timing is so perfect, because the art form is really in flux,” he said. “The piece of the puzzle that is happening is that technology is getting better at connecting people to films. Filmmaking is exploding. The audience being able to find new films is broadening and increasing. The three institutions—MICA, JHU, the Maryland Film Festival—get it. It’s a big deal, what’s happening in the industry and what’s happening here. It’s going to change everyone involved, and it’s going to change Baltimore,” Dietz said.

Wright points out that there are huge benefits to being based in Baltimore. The city’s diversity offers a wealth of filming locations and material to inspire both fiction and non-fiction stories; and it is not as crowded with film crews as some other cities known for filmmaking such as New York.

Robillard, who left a thriving independent filmmaking practice in Portland, Oregon, to come to MICA, finds the city’s environment stimulating. “Baltimore is a city in a state of flux. There’s space to make and create. I know that things are not perfect here. It faces the same issues that many urban areas face,” she said. “At the same time, people are talking about things here and are actively involved in creating art that reflects this state of flux. It makes for a more interesting atmosphere to work in as a filmmaker,” she said.

Musgrove said that she believes that in a world increasingly dominated by moving images, people of all backgrounds need to see their reflection in this visual culture. “Visual validation can help create understanding and empowerment in individuals and communities,” she said. “That visual validation further benefits us by reminding us of the universality of our stories. I’m excited about working and collaborating with the students and faculty here at MICA.”
Back to School Season opened at Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects in the Lower East Side of Manhattan on August 11, 2015. As the name suggests, school, in an ontological sense, was the binder for the eight artists in the exhibition: Thomas Dahlberg, Stephen Clark, Erin High, Lauren Jefferson, Minsol Kim, Jinie Park, myself, and Henry Taylor. Seven of us had all just graduated from the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting where Taylor had been one of our visiting artists.

This idea of perpetually going back to school was nowhere more evident than in the work of Taylor. I reached out to his assistant the summer before my second year of grad school thinking my invitation would immediately be met with a polite rejection. Typically West Coast artists visit West Coast schools and vice versa. But to my surprise, Taylor agreed to stop by Baltimore via London before heading back home to Los Angeles. After spending time with him, it was no longer a surprise he'd accepted our invitation. Not only was Taylor’s mentorship under the late painter James Jarvaise a pivotal influence in his career, but he’s managed to remain a student of painting. Never content resting on his status as a blue chip artist, he’s constantly taking himself back to school, even if that means the occasional diversion to the principal’s office. He continues to be someone we all look to. We’ve stayed in touch, and I was lucky enough to include him in the show.

Over those two years in Hoffberger, the seven of us were constantly being forced to question the nature of our position in a “painting only” program. After so many declarations of painting’s death, and its subsequent revivals, we stayed close to an understanding of painting as an autonomous language—which meant never having to defend it.

That language became our primary source of creative communication over the course of two years. We were revisiting the same question: “Am I communicating what I want to communicate?” If the answer was no, we were never hesitant to revise, even if that meant starting from the ground up. Instead of attempting to develop a defining style, we focused on using painting as a means to a communicative end. This is something I really admire about Taylor. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a show of his where the work didn’t speak, even from piece to piece. If one painting needs to be about regret, then it’s there on the wall. But beside it there might be a painting about his adoration of a family member. In a recent interview with Jennifer Samet for Hyperallergic, Taylor said, “It’s more about starting to realize you are free. Who is stopping you? You CAN go there. On the other hand, sometimes I just want to paint my son, or my mom, or my grandmother. And I have time for that. If I feel it, I do it. Am I being too complacent?” I suppose I already gave my answer to that last question. As it happened, Samet visited the Hoffberger School for final reviews on her way back from Los Angeles where she had just met Taylor for his interview.

The show itself would not have been possible without the assistance of our director, Joan Waltemath, the generosity and vision of Harvey, Sangram Majumdar, Samet, AC Hudgins, and Taylor. As for the seven of us, it is a rarity in our field for a group to become as close as we did, and we knew that was an asset going out.

Michael Evans is a 2015 graduate of the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting who continues his studio practice in Baltimore.
THIS YEAR MICA WILL HOST A SERIES OF EVENTS TO MARK THE LEROY E. HOFFBERGER SCHOOL OF PAINTING 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

RETHINKING PAINTING
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28 | 3:30 PM
FRED LAZARUS IV CENTER AUDITORIUM, 131 W. NORTH AVE.

The LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting will host a panel discussion, Rethinking Painting, with Jutta Koether, Nancy Princenthal, Raphael Rubinstein, and Barry Schwabsky, moderated by program director Joan Waltemath. A fall show of Hoffberger current students’ work will follow in the Riggs Gallery in the Lazarus Center.

THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSFORMATION:
CURATED INVITATIONAL 50TH HOFFBERGER ALUMNI EXHIBITION AND OPENING RECEPTION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23 – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5
RECEPTION: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30 | 5 PM
FOX BUILDING: MEYERHOF AND DECKER GALLERIES
1301 W. MOUNT ROYAL AVE.

The Curated Invitational 50th Hoffberger Alumni Exhibition and Opening Reception will be hosted by the MICA Board of Trustees. The exhibition is curated by Caitlin Tucker-Melvin ’14 (Curatorial Practice MFA).

The LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting 50th Anniversary Celebration chairperson is Vice President for Advancement Rita Walters. Co-chairs are Joan Waltemath, Leslie King-Hammond, and Jamie Johnson.
"I always made sure that all those people who thought they weren’t part of the opportunity to participate in the arts could find a way to become part of that experience," said Leslie King-Hammond, PhD, graduate dean emerita and founding director of the Center for Race and Culture at MICA. Her words are realized with the creation of the Leslie King-Hammond Graduate Award. The inaugural award provides $5,000 to $10,000 to 11 incoming and five returning MICA students from various backgrounds, experiences, and groups who have been historically underrepresented in the fields of fine arts, design, and related practices. The scholarship supports the expansion of diversity in the College’s graduate community.

For the Leslie King-Hammond Graduate Award, MFA, MA, and post-baccalaureate incoming and returning students shared their perspectives on diversity and how they will contribute to increasing critical and creative discourse. The awardees’ spectrum of achievements as artists, critics, designers, educators, makers, curators, scholars, and activists exemplifies the importance of diversity at the College and the greater Baltimore community through thought-provoking art and design.

The students’ words echo the lifelong work of artist, curator, author, and scholar King-Hammond, as well as demonstrate diversity at MICA, an institution that underscores and celebrates diversity as a value central to the content and delivery of all of its programs, activities, and decisions. Awards such as this one not only showcase the depth of students’ expertise, but the mindfulness of these artists and designers as they use their work to push and explore social boundaries through the arts.

The following excerpts are from the 2015 award recipients: —
INHAIRITANCE

I paint positive images of black people because of the desperate need to see and self-identify with good. I create and promote images that communicate that black people have value. I combat tokenism and stereotypical tropes that flood our visual culture.
After many years of working in the San Francisco Bay Area, I am looking forward to creating in my hometown of Baltimore. My film projects will explore what it means to be a woman of color in patriarchal societies.
Ji Won Song ’16
Teaching, MA

* FROM THE SERIES WITH GRANDMOTHER *

I believe there is uniqueness in each culture’s art language. Art will have incredible influence once we notice the uniqueness within the diversity and start to understand and combine the strength of each artistic language.

Ume Hussain ’17
Studio Art (Low-Residency), MFA

* SACRED SPACE *

My current work stems from the Muslim experience in a post 9/11 America, highlighting issues of otherness and loss of sacred space—a dialogue that seldom takes place. The growing chasm between facts and widespread misinformation has assisted in creating a highly polarized global community. In an attempt to address this gap, I am working with the causes of marginalization and investigating the cliches associated with the practices, beliefs and worldview that mold the unfamiliar.
As a Jewish Korean American, I am continuously shaping my definition of diversity. Adopted from Seoul, South Korea, into a white, Jewish household in Maryland, I tend to look at myself as “different.”
Alfonso Fernandez-Vazquez ’16  
LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting, MFA

UNTITLED

As a person of color, an immigrant, and first-generation college graduate, I have carried on with patience, courage, fortitude, and perseverance in the effort toward completing my Master of Fine Arts, attaining success for myself.

Alanna Rivera ’17  
Community Arts, MFA

DIABLO

Through exploring questions of cultural authenticity in Baltimore, I will not only grow as a person and as an artist, but I will also be better able to help underrepresented communities.
A CONVERSATION

with

ELLEN LUPTON

THE NAME ELLEN LUPTON HAS LONG BEEN SYNONYMOUS WITH GRAPHIC DESIGN. AS DIRECTOR OF THE MFA GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM, LUPTON IS WELL-KNOWN NOT ONLY AS A DESIGNER, BUT AS A CURATOR OF INTERNATIONAL STATUS, AN AUTHOR, AND AN EDUCATOR AS WELL. COMMOTION SAT DOWN WITH HER RECENTLY TO TALK ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD AND THE UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE MFA PROGRAM HERE AT MICA.
WHAT ARE THE KEY TRENDS OCCURRING IN GRAPHIC DESIGN NOW?

Our program is embracing the influence of digital media, social media, and the convergence of graphic design with video and filmmaking. All graphic designers are now learning motion design skills and video editing skills. Designers have become adept at producing complex projects across media. That’s how we teach design today. Our students are creating visual assets they can use in print, in branding campaigns, in interaction design, in film and video, in animation—everything. The materials they create graphically can live across media.

YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS SPAN NUMEROUS FIELDS. YOU’RE A DESIGNER, A WRITER, A CURATOR, AND AN EDUCATOR. YOU HAVE WRITTEN MANY BOOKS, MOST RECENTLY, HOW POSTERS WORK, BEAUTIFUL USERS, AND TYPE ON SCREEN. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLES IN YOUR RECENT BOOKS?

We have published many books that invite students and designers to grasp ideas and concepts that they can use in their work. Some of these books are published with students here at MICA. Type on Screen, a book from 2014, provides an overview of digital design principles. The book was written, researched, and designed with MICA graduate students. We’ve published half a dozen books now that are created by our students and faculty. These books are popular with young designers all around the world because they are invitations to engage.

WHAT DO THESE STUDENT COLLABORATORS BRING TO THESE PROJECTS?

Our classrooms at MICA are laboratories for design research. Our graduate students and graduate faculty—and even the undergraduate students—aren’t just creating their own work. They’re creating knowledge to share with the profession. It raises the expectations of everyone in the room when you understand that your work might be published and that it might be shared with a worldwide design community. It takes the project out of the limited world of your portfolio to become a contribution to our field. One of our mottos in the graduate program is “Engage the discourse.” You’re not here just to build your own career or to find your own style. You’re here to take part in an international conversation about the future of design. Publishing is a powerful way to do that.
WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MICA’S CENTER FOR DESIGN THINKING?

The main outcome for the Center for Design Thinking is the books that we publish. These books are both practical and intellectual. All of them are about ideas and principles in design practice presented in a high-level way. These are college-level or graduate-level books that inquire about how design works.

Publishing is very labor intensive, and the process demands a lot from our students. Some students work on their projects as part of a class; some get grants that enable them to work in the Center outside of class time. The books earn some income that is used to develop new research projects or to help faculty with their research. These are all professionally published books that are distributed worldwide.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THIS PUBLISHING WORK?

Increasingly, our students come to MICA with ideas for their own books. And they see MICA as a place where the faculty is very active in the design field. We can make connections for a graduate student who has the ability to write and publish. Increasingly, our alums are going out and publishing their own books in addition to working as designers in a range of studios and companies.

HOW IS CURRICULUM DEVELOPED FOR THE PROGRAM?

The program is growing and expanding. Curriculum is developed by me and Jennifer Cole Phillips, who directs the program with me. This year, we hired a new full-time faculty member, Jason Gottlieb ’13 (Graphic Design MFA). The three of us are responsible for creating the curriculum. Our program offers opportunities to produce personally driven work that’s very individual, allowing the students to define a sensibility in a design problem and even choose the medium they want to work with. We balance that personal work with public work that has a service element and contributes to society and that is often collaborative in nature.
Howard University College of Fine Arts MFA candidates come to MICA with advanced skills. Every year, we accept a few students who come from a different discipline, because that creates variety and diversity in our program. We’ll accept some people from environmental design or illustration or journalism, but most of our students come to us with a strong design portfolio. What they do in graduate school is get ready to shift the direction of their career or re-enter the profession at a different level. Nearly all our alumni are working in the field.

We’re interested in confronting the world of design as it exists and not so much in creating an art-based experience for our students.

Our practical emphasis is unique among graduate programs. Our program is geared towards graphic design as a legible, understandable, practical discipline. The work that our students do is grounded in the reality of design practice. The work is self-motivated and experimental but it has its feet on the ground. We’re interested in confronting the world of design as it exists and not so much in creating an art-based experience for our students.

Also, our program is quite structured. Many other graduate programs are looser and more about creating a space for students to do what they want to do. But we feel that the practice of design is problem-oriented and that designers thrive when they’re given a situation or a challenge or a prompt as opposed to always defining their own problem.
And they work in diverse areas after graduating—interactive media, digital product design, and web design, but also in print and branding and exhibition design and environmental graphics. We have students working in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. Many of our international students are able to stay and work in the United States, which is quite an achievement.

**CO**

*YOU HAVE BEEN CURATOR OF CONTEMPORARY DESIGN AT THE COOPER-HEWITT, SMITHSONIAN DESIGN MUSEUM SINCE 1992. TELL US ABOUT YOUR TENURE AT THE MUSEUM.*

I organize exhibitions on contemporary design at Cooper-Hewitt. My most recent exhibition is called *How Posters Work*. It’s a survey of poster design that’s presented to the public as a primer in visual thinking. It’s a kind of dictionary of design concepts that has been very popular with our audiences. The exhibition is open until Friday, January 29, 2016.

**EL**

*AND WHAT DO YOU THINK VISITING ARTISTS BRING TO THE MICA EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE?*

Having a visiting artist on campus is like having a party. Our visitors present a lecture but also work actively with the students, who get to know them and see how they work. Visiting artists create variety and vitality in our studio culture.

**CO**

*YOU RECENTLY WROTE AN ARTICLE ABOUT SUCCESS FOR A GRAPHIC DESIGNER. HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?*

To me, success is being part of a community and engaging in a conversation about what you do. That community can be large or small. It can be focused around something narrow and professional like typeface design or publication design, or it could be more outward and social, like exploring “slow design” or building up the cycling community where you live. Success means being part of a conversation. You’re not just going to work every day and getting stuff done for clients; you’re contributing to something bigger. You’re engaged in the AIGA or in community organizing around design or social issues or national politics—anything.

**CO**

*SO SINCE 1997, WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED ON MICA’S CAMPUS AS CHAIR OF THE UNDERGRADUATE GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAM, WHAT ARE YOUR ASSESSMENTS ABOUT THE STATE OF THE FIELD?*

I have seen the Dot Com bubble come and go. I have seen the recession of 2008 and then the recovery that took place afterwards, which has been quite strong for graphic designers. We have seen our alums, both graduate and undergraduate, leave MICA and get employed in the industry of graphic design, and we’re really happy about that. We want to prepare students to go work in the field and also be independent thinkers who know how to apply design more broadly to their lives by engaging in conversations and not just being a cog in the wheel of commerce.

Design has become more digital. It has become more accessible to the public—better known to the public. The field has gotten larger, not smaller, despite the dissemination of software tools into the hands of everyone. My kids learned Photoshop in third grade. That fact makes them more knowledgeable about design. The dissemination of tools doesn’t diminish the importance of expertise—professional expertise. That professional expertise is what we give our students here. ✤
2015 FIRST-YEAR JURIED MFA EXHIBITION

By MARCUS CIVIN

MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART — RIGGS AND LEIDY GALLERIES — AUGUST 2015

With 28 artists and designers and a bracing sinewy 31-page catalog by Graphic Design MFA student Hieu Tran, the first-year juried show was bigger than usual this year. Tran’s publication avoids plodding catalogue tropes—requisite pictures of older works, overlong statements—instead it aggregates and presents fresh information culled from the students by guest juror and curator Ingrid Schaffner.

From the MICA students she met, Schaffner wanted to know: “What would you be if you weren’t an artist?” They answered: “Librarian comedienne; philosopher belly dancer; poet; biologist; entrepreneur; radical pedestrian…”

The Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh recently hired Schaffner to travel the world and craft the 2018 Carnegie International, their showcase of global contemporary art. A polymath, Schaffner is consistently fascinated, amused, and, in person, often viscerally moved. She is affable and easy to talk to. She travels light, asks good questions, and is willing to get her hands dirty. Through a flawless string of exemplary exhibitions, she has reconsidered surrealism, puppets, deep storage, queer voice, and the use of wall labels in museums; she has also written on modernist masters and worked with a diverse array of contemporary artists who are as precise, prolific, and influential as she is: from process artist Barry Le Va, to painter, printmaker, and installation artist Polly Apfelbaum, to illustrator Myra Kalman.

Schaffner asked further questions of the MICA students, first about what is indispensable and second about what is disposable. Every answer to both of these questions could point to a kind of material life blood or treasure: awkward misprints, balls of clay, a funeral wreath, a sketch of a lamb or a sketch for an accordion book, a banana peel, a certain computer program or evidence of a slopped-up stain. The students Schaffner has brought together are challenging the materials at hand, ennobling the overlooked, making the disposable indispensable and their lived experience resonate, from who they are and who they will be.

Sarah Clough Chambers sprays, cuts, and ripples sheets of cardboard into haunting insect-like masks. Sutton Demlong interlocks wood beams most likely from a Baltimore row house; the beams cradle but threaten to pop a giant balloon. Doohyun Yoon ornaments the abandoned and flakey innards of a formerly motivational school bulletin board. Josh Sender inks dense overlapping drawings of the most expensive buildings in the world onto the gallery window, conjuring the spirit of all of the other buildings in the world instead. Julia “Cheeny” Celebro-Royer re-creates memories from family photographs, including her father’s motorcycle created mostly ad-hoc from cardboard, packing tape, and twine.

Schaffner worked with the students and the exhibitions staff at MICA for three days to place and install the students’ work. She listened, joked, gave a nudge here and there—“Go get one of those pedestals.” “Can you make that into a video?” “How about drawing that on the window?” “How does it look over there?” “I want to get this one in there, too.” She tried to assure that her placement, and her care, would help the students see fully what they were up to, if they weren’t seeing it already...

Many are coming back to school after a year of police brutality protests and peace marches. When they aren’t in the gallery, or at the table saw, the press, or the printer, these students are busy with other things. This year, they will attend the Community Arts Power Lecture Series featuring local change agents, and much as they engaged with Schaffner, they will engage with artists including Charles Long, Nicola Lopez, Bryan Kim, Torwkase Dyson, curators Pablo Helguera and Robert Storr, critics Barry Schwabsky and Michelle Kuo, and designers including Benedikt Reichenbach and Bonnie Siegler. They will take electives in community engagement, social justice, creative writing, professional development, and critical theory; they will help grow maker spaces and go to book fairs. They will make their own hardware and shout on the bike ride back from the Baltimore Museum of Art. They will focus, and they won’t. They will fill their pockets and the backs of trucks, and they will expand their fields of vision.

Marcus Civin is MICA’s associate dean of graduate studies for curriculum and assessment. He is also a critic and performance artist.
The students Schaffner has brought together are challenging the materials at hand, ennobling the overlooked, making the disposable indispensible and their lived experience resonate, from who they are and who they will be.
This is all happening because of the work coming out of MICA’s Center for Social Design—work that began back in 2007, when the center’s founder and co-director, Mike Weikert ’05 (Graphic Design MFA), had an idea.

At the time, Weikert was newly appointed as co-chair of MICA’s undergraduate graphic design program, and he began thinking about the process of design and the process of educating young designers. He knew design was evolving, that real-world practices were becoming more interdisciplinary. At the same time, he was keenly interested in a growing awareness within the design community of social design—a creative process and practice dedicated to understanding social problems and supporting positive social change.

Despite these notable movements in the field, design students were still often taught in a traditional approach, one that kept them siloed from other disciplines and from the growing social design movement. Weikert wanted to change that.

So he turned his idea—that graduate and undergraduate students could work together with partners and communities outside the institution on socially focused projects—into Practice-Based Studios. Launched in 2008, these semester-long courses join MICA students across disciplines with an array of outside partners to collaborate on projects that use design to positively impact society.

The Studios’ successful collaboration with Real Food Farm is a prime example of their work. The urban farm, which is located in Baltimore’s Clifton Park neighborhood, wanted to increase awareness and use of their products among city residents, many of whom live in ‘food deserts’ with poor access to fresh produce. So they teamed with students in a Practice-Based studio to explore solutions.

After a month spent working at the farm, those students came up with the Real Food Farm food truck, which hosts mobile food markets and delivers produce to homes for a modest cost. They also designed a bright green iconic logo, which the farm uses as a moving billboard on the side of their truck—community members flock to it when it stops in their neighborhood.

Continued
To date, the Studios have raised more than one million dollars in outside funding, engaged more than 250 students and faculty across 12 disciplines within MICA, and worked on more than 50 projects with partners that include the Baltimore City Health Department, Whole Foods Market, the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine, National Wildlife Federation, the Maryland Energy Administration, and many more. The projects have been highly successful — so successful that they marked the beginning of a larger focus on social design at MICA.

Today, the Studios are just one of a core set of interdisciplinary opportunities and educational offerings based in MICA’s Center for Social Design. Along with the Practice-Based Studios, the Center houses the MA in Social Design (MASD) program, post-graduate fellowships, and long-term Impact Initiatives.

The first offshoot of the Studios’ success was MASD. Lee Davis, who co-directs the center and MASD with Weikert, explained, “After the Studios started, [Weikert] realized that there were more and more students who wanted to take more than one class. There really was a hunger for a deeper immersive experience.”

That hunger led to the creation of the MASD program in 2011. Currently in its fifth year, MASD was the first graduate program in the country based on a social design model, and it emphasizes a practice-based approach to using the process of design to develop tangible outcomes.

“Students in MASD incubate a thesis project, and many of them continue to further develop that idea after they graduate,” Davis said. “Kenny Bademosi ’15, for example, is someone whose thesis was the start of a great project that began at MICA and has blossomed.” Bademosi’s project, Serophobia, delved into the stigmatization of HIV-positive black men, a phenomenon that can lead to the avoidance of medical care and more HIV infections. Working with the University of Maryland’s Department of Medicine, Bademosi reached out to Baltimore’s black MSM (Men who have Sex with Men) community to open up communication about HIV/AIDS and its stigma, and used that insight and information to design a more open online dating experience for black MSM. The program has been so successful that Johns Hopkins University and the city’s health department have continued funding the effort.

One of the benefits of the approach of the Social Design program is thinking about how design is about the process and not fully focused on the delivered materials.
Being able to give MASD students the funding to continue their work post-graduation was the reason Weikert developed the post-graduate fellowships that fall under the umbrella of the Center for Social Design. Established with the support of the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation in 2012, the Social Design Fellowship includes a stipend, institutional resources, and studio space, which allows two MASD graduates a year to deepen the thesis they developed during their time at MICA.

The fellowship also keeps innovative ideas and talent in Baltimore, including Briony Hynson ’12, a former Social Design Fellow who was able to continue her work creating public spaces that promote play within the city’s underserved areas.

Currently deputy director of the nonprofit Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) in Baltimore, Hynson noted, “One of the benefits of the approach of the Social Design program is thinking about how design is about the process and not fully focused on the delivered materials. If we can use design as a structural problem-solving framework, it can build on input from stakeholders that will help create better outcomes. NDC has been around since 1968, during the design movement of the time that’s similar to what we’re seeing now—there’s an interest in seeing what we can do for society rather than just a focus on designing a pair of sneakers or a car or a building. There’s more to the process that can create larger positive impact.”

With the 2014 launch of the Center for Social Design in the Lazarus Center for Graduate Studies, the Practice-Based Studios, MASD, and Social Design Fellows were brought together under one roof for the first time. That in turn has allowed Davis and Weikert to take the ideas generated through these programs one step further.

“The physicality of this space has breathed a whole new life into this vision,” Davis said. “We started to look at these [social] issues not only in a curricular and educational context, but asked ourselves what kind of role the Center could play in developing a real and lasting social impact.” Their answer is the Impact Initiatives, multiyear projects with outside partners to address the big issues of our day. While the initiatives bring faculty, students, and fellows to the table, the work isn’t tied to the academic calendar. Instead, the projects are long-term, with an initial priority to focus on education and youth, climate change, and health.

Since Weikert had that first idea back in 2007, other colleges and universities have launched social design programs of their own. MICA’s approach remains distinctive. Not only has the Center for Social Design garnered multiple awards, it has helped advance social design around the world. It was invited to the Clinton Global Initiative University, was the first design program to receive the Ashoka U-Cordes Innovation Award in 2014, and has also acted as host to universities from the Netherlands, Hungary, and Latin America.

As Davis noted, “Although we’re committed to and immersed here in Baltimore, we’re also connecting more nationally and internationally.” The true value of an idea becomes evident over time. Good ideas transform a promising thought into a solid concept that grows and endures. The best ideas resonate deeply, and their purpose is not lost in the implementation.

If you look at the evolution of social design at MICA and its growing impact on Baltimore—and beyond—you can say that Weikert had a really good idea.
MICA INTEGRATES NEW GRADUATE PROGRAM FOR DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

USER EXPERIENCE DESIGN PROGRAM LAUNCHES IN 2016

With an increasing demand for user experience (UX) designers, MICA’s School for Professional and Continuing Studies continues to expand its array of graduate offerings for creative professionals with the new Master of Professional Studies in UX Design.

UX design leads to the optimal interface between individuals and digital systems. Throughout the process, UX designers consider user research, information architecture, and functionality to create elegant and efficient systems.

Set to launch in 2016, the new program gives students with a background in design the training necessary to translate their skills to the rapidly expanding and high-paying user experience field. Students in the program will gain critical new knowledge that will allow them to create interactions within digital systems and apply that knowledge across a variety of industries including gaming, general technology, entertainment, healthcare, and education.

The program will prepare professionals to understand both the design and computer science sides of the user experience equation.

“The MPS in UX Design was created for design professionals—graphic designers, industrial designers, and more—who also have an interest in human/computer interaction and want to pursue that interest professionally,” said David Gracyalny, vice provost of the School for Professional and Continuing Studies. “Through this new program, they can blend their design abilities with new skills that have a direct application to the user experience profession.”

“We are developing an intensive and marketable program that will provide students with tools and resources that will assist them in finding employment in the fields they are interested in,” said Crystal Shamblee, program director for UX Design and Design Leadership.

Through this new program, they can blend their design abilities with new skills that have a direct application to the user experience profession.

The program’s curriculum covers subjects such as interface design, user research, coding, information architecture, and usability. And Baltimore’s proximity to a high density of UX practitioners will allow the program to bring a number of partners to the classroom to work on real-world, industry-specific projects. Students in the program will not only gain hands-on experience, but will also have access to professionals who can offer insight into the dynamic nature of the user interface profession, networking, and best practices.

Although the 15-month program requires three short residencies on MICA’s campus, the majority of study will take place online, allowing students to pursue a graduate degree while maintaining their current work-life balance. The residencies provide opportunities for students to work face to face with their peers and start to build professional networks.

“MICA is committed to offering programs that enable working students to meet specific career goals, and the MPS in UX Design is the latest response to this growing demand,” Gracyalny added.
AWARDS & RECOGNITION

DEUTSCH SOCIAL DESIGN FELLOW

BECKY SLOGERIS ’12  
SOCIAL DESIGN MA

Slogeris was named a Baltimore Social Innovator by the Warnock Foundation. During her time as a volunteer for Baltimore City Public Schools, Slogeris authored My Baltimore Book to teach third-graders more about civic engagement in Baltimore City. She was also named a Deutsch Social Design Fellow during the first year of the program in 2012.

WHITE HOUSE PRESIDENTIAL INNOVATION FELLOWS

EMILY IANACONE ’15  
SOCIAL DESIGN MA  
+  
KATE MCCALL-KILEY ’16  
DESIGN LEADERSHIP MA

Ianacone and McCall-Kiley are currently serving as White House Presidential Innovation Fellows. This highly competitive program pairs talented, diverse technologists and innovators with top decision makers of the federal government to tackle some of our nation’s biggest challenges.

NEW AMERICAN PAINTINGS #117

SARAH SCHNEIDER ’15  
ILLUSTRATION PRACTICE MFA

Schneider’s works were recently juried in New American Paintings #117, a highly selective juried competition that presents the work of 40 painters selected out of thousands of entries. Earlier this year, Schneider was invited to Mannheim, Germany, to give a workshop and lecture funded by the Embassy of the United States in Germany.

RUBYS ARTIST PROJECT GRANT IN MEDIA ARTS

HELEN GLAZER ’78  
MOUNT ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART MFA

Glazer is one of eight artists to receive a Rubys Artist Project Grant in Media Arts from the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance. The grant will be used to support Above, Below, and Within the Ice, a series of hand-colored photographic prints and painted sculptures of ice formations, source material for which will be gathered during Glazer’s upcoming research trip to Antarctica.

INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER’S OUTSTANDING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE AWARD

MAGALI HEBERT-HUOT ’15  
RINEHART SCHOOL OF SCULPTURE MFA

Hebert-Huot has received the International Sculpture Center’s Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award. This year, more than 420 students from 150 institutions were nominated for the prestigious award, which included a detailed viewing process of all submitted work.

2015 ADOBE DESIGN ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS IN EXHIBITION DESIGN

HITESH SINGHAL ’16  
GRAPHIC DESIGN MFA

Singhal was named the winner of the 2015 Adobe Design Achievement Awards in Exhibition Design for his typography exhibition, Alterego Project-Hedonistic Monk. In addition, MICA’s Graphic Design department’s rebranding campaign was named a finalist for this award. Only 16 awards were given to the participants, out of more than 2,600 worldwide submissions.

2015 NATIONAL ART EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NAEA) TECHNOLOGY TEACHER OF THE YEAR

ANDREW WATSON ’14  
ART EDUCATION MA

Watson was named the 2015 National Art Education Association (NAEA) Technology Teacher of the Year during its national conference in New Orleans. Watson currently teaches photography, digital arts and design, animation, and game design for the Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia.

2015 DC PUBLIC LIBRARY FOUNDATION (DCPLF)/MICA CURATORIAL FELLOW

JENNIFER GRAY ’15  
CURATORIAL PRACTICE MFA

Gray was named the 2015 DC Public Library Foundation (DCPLF)/MICA Curatorial Fellow. DCPLF/MICA Curatorial fellows are called upon to design and implement workshops that cover different aspects of curatorial practice, and to develop strategies to engage a variety of audiences. The fellowship opportunity is open to any second-year curatorial practice student and lasts for one year.

MICA COMMOTION — FALL 2015
LAUNCHING ARTISTS IN BALTIMORE
For a recent graduate, $10,000 can go a long way when getting a new project off the ground. Recognizing the importance of such financial support is one reason why MICA launched the Launch Artists in Baltimore (LAB) Award in 2012. Keeping creative talent in Baltimore was the other reason.

The $10,000 LAB Award is given annually to five new graduate student alumni (or alumni collectives) enabling them to stay in the city to work on events, studios, public art installations, and small businesses. To date, nearly 25 artists and designers of various disciplines have pursued initiatives that have helped to strengthen Baltimore’s neighborhoods and further bolstered the city’s identity as a dynamic cultural hub.

The power of film resonates with MICA alumnus Crissian Chen ’14 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA), who was inspired to create the Halide Workshop Series in Baltimore after seeing independent artist community film labs across the nation. He was also compelled by Baltimore’s potential to become a hub for filmmaking.

Chen collaborated with fellow LAB Award recipient Margaret Rorison’s ’12 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA) Sight Unseen, a nomadic series showcasing film, video, and expanded cinema, to offer workshops with experimental filmmakers as instructors.

The workshops focused on the post-production process. Rorison has since continued them.

“This award became a project of its own that built my personal skills as an artist and a project that benefited the entire film community in Baltimore by bringing in film instructors from around the globe, such as Richard Tuohy and Dianne Barrie from Melbourne, Australia,” Chen said.

Chen has recently relocated to China and will expand his work in Shanghai’s film community, researching LGBT issues.

He appreciates his time in the MFA in Photographic and Electronic Media program, noting that it was instrumental in advancing his skills and preparing him for a career in the global film industry.
A small seed has begun a new journey for alumna Julie Buisson ’15 (Design Leadership MBA/MA), growing into an agricultural development business. Buisson and business partner and scientist Mark Verdecia are creating a sustainable food ecosystem in Baltimore with funding from the LAB Award.

At the root of Buisson’s venture is hydroponics, growing plants without soil—specifically, microgreens. She explained, “Microgreens are the first stage of any plant growth. The microgreen stage happens after sprouting has occurred, when the first leaves are on the stem.”

Using seeds and recyclable and biodegradable materials, Buisson has begun to grow flavorful microgreens in a trailer in Baltimore’s Remington neighborhood. Under the guidance of locals Larry and Zhana Hountz, Buisson will have her first harvest by mid-October. The business will also move from its current location to its future site—Our House at 29th Street and Remington Avenue, where it will be used for educational purposes for young children. Nonprofits can use the business as a resource “to empower them to build their own growing rooms and to start to grow microgreens to eat or sell to restaurants to create their own revenue streams,” she said.

The LAB Award gave Buisson the independence to start her own business, enabling her to purchase the trailer, equipment, and growing materials.

The return on investment from MICA and The Johns Hopkins University’s Design Leadership graduate program has proven to be invaluable. “MICA taught really valuable manual skills that I am now able to apply—using 3D printing and making renderings—things that allowed me to become a maker and take my idea beyond the idea stage,” Buisson said.
We have a potential to create an environment that encourages artists to stay in Baltimore and continue to create and contribute to the city.

The Jones Falls Expressway’s underpass is currently a stark contrast to the bustle overhead, where vehicles zoom on I-83. But what lies in the stillness below will soon be transformed into a vibrant urban art park, an undertaking of alumnus Richard Best ’14 (Design Leadership MBA, MA).

A fellow artist’s work on the underpass brought Best to the site. This visit ultimately resulted in the creation of Section 1, a nonprofit organization that aims to take underutilized pieces of land and use art to turn them into community centers.

Beyond the graffiti, cracked concrete, gravel, and overgrown weeds, Best saw how the underused area could benefit the Baltimore community as an art space.

He will revamp the 3.5-acre site in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District to feature festivals, a skate park, and incubator space. The urban art park will also feature more than 60,000 square feet of paintable surfaces, three venues for live performances, and an acre of green space.

While the community will enjoy many benefits, one that Best is particularly excited about is the impact Section 1 will have on ensuring that Baltimore remains a draw for artists.

Best received a LAB Award to help push the project forward. He credits his time at MICA for giving him the inspiration and insight to not only come up with the idea, but to get buy-in from others.

“We have a potential to create an environment that encourages artists to stay in Baltimore and continue to create and contribute to the city,” Best said.
Certain commuters in Baltimore and Washington, DC, will have their transit experience become interactive with performance this spring. *Bus, Books, and Poets: The Spoke & Word Tour* by Melani Douglass '15 (Curatorial Practice MFA) brought together regional high school students, emerging artists, and community organizations to bring awareness to the epidemic of sexual assault.

The LAB Award not only kept Douglass in Baltimore, it accelerated her project. With the funding, she has been able to develop poetry writing classes, an art and activism workshop, and conflict resolution training, which will culminate with public performances and conversations at area bus stops and train stations. “My work is fueled by how uncommon people navigate common places,” Douglass said.

A community engagement manager at Everyman Theatre in Baltimore, Douglass’ dedication to the arts and community engagement has been intensified by her studies at MICA.

“The [Curatorial Practice program’s] core class, Practicum I, trained me to expand how I work with others, recognize the importance of partnerships at all levels, and identify community, especially how to engage different communities,” Douglass said.

For another recent exhibition, *Love on the Line: Stories of a Baltimore Worth Living For*, Douglass received best pop-up series from *Baltimore* magazine and *City Paper*. 
When I arrived in Baltimore two years ago, I was struck by the vitality of MICA’s graduate community that I experienced with my first walk through the graduate spaces. I continue to be impressed by the vibrancy — the original/fresh/experimental work on display in our galleries and buildings at every turn; the fervent conversations among students and faculty in our studios; the fearless exploration of new techniques and materials in our workshops; and the myriad posters announcing the impressive array of visiting artists and designers to our programs. Coming to work every day is exhilarating, and I love interacting with this dynamic and inspirational community.

This creative churn is fed by the breadth and diverse range of our nineteen graduate programs. Students and faculty in these programs represent the full reach of art and design disciplines and each member of our community magnifies the generative life of the place. We realize that each individual approaches his/her work differently and because of that breadth, we offer opportunities for a full range of experiences that students may tailor to their own personal needs and interests. Students may immerse themselves in their studios or expand their skill set and knowledge through liberal arts courses, professional development, interdisciplinary course work, and workshops in the graduate common core offerings.

Students also step outside of MICA to tap the rich resources of Baltimore and our surrounding neighborhood of Station North. Because of its location on the eastern seaboard, its affordability, and its openness to creative communities, Baltimore provides a wealth of options for graduate students in art, design, criticism, curatorship, and education to enhance their practices. Furthermore, today—at this particular time in history—when many in our city are using their talents to speak up and stand up with others to bring attention to systemic social, racial, and economic challenges, artists and designers can actively contribute to positive, productive, and necessary change in the city. It is a unique time to engage and to work with communities and residents in Baltimore to make a difference.

Capturing and representing this momentum in the graduate community and Baltimore is our new magazine, Commotion. Published twice a year, this magazine presents the news, activities, perspectives, and opinions of those in the graduate community. From the work of our students and faculty to the impressive recognition and exploits of our alumni, the magazine provides information about the innovation, the energy, and the contribution emerging from the graduate school at MICA. It represents on its pages the vitality that launches faculty and students into Baltimore and beyond to “stir things up” and make an impact.
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