We’re pleased to share our second issue of Commotion, a magazine produced twice each year to share ideas, news, and of course, art—all that emerges 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.

COVER BY DOUGLASTHOMAS (GRAPHIC DESIGN MFA) I AM WHAT I READ, 2016
The Art of Urban Environmentalism

Find out how MFA in Community Arts students are collaborating with an East Baltimore activist to confront environmental injustice.
Dr. Karen Carroll
DEAN OF THE CENTER FOR ART EDUCATION
*THE FLORENCE GASKINS HARPER CHAIR FOR ART EDUCATION
at MICA
“She has always wanted what’s best for me as a person, not just as a professional teacher in the arts. She is like that with everyone,” explained Shyla Rao ’97, who worked with Carroll while a student in MICA’s Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program and, currently, as that same program’s director.

Rao goes on to say that when she says “everyone,” she does not simply mean other MICA alumni or faculty. Carroll, she explains, is always reaching beyond the College’s ‘bubble’ to the profession at large and to the city she calls home.

An example of that dedication to both the profession and to Baltimore can be found in Carroll’s work with the Baltimore Design School (BDS), a 6-12 charter school specializing in design education that Carroll has been involved with since its inception. She first worked on the school’s planning committee and currently serves on its board of trustees, and intends to continue providing support to the school even as her responsibilities at MICA decrease.

“The ideas behind BDS really resonated with me. I saw so much potential, and along with that, a real need for this kind of design-focused education within Baltimore,” Carroll explained, going on to note that the charter school is the fourth such specialized secondary educational institution she’s been closely involved with over her career.

Located in the historic Statin North building where Thomas Painter once created the bottle cap, BDS uses a curriculum organized around project-based exploration in its three areas of focus: architecture, fashion, and graphic design. Carroll points out that the model allows students—the majority of whom come from underserved areas of Baltimore—to discover new abilities and interests, which in turn propel them to become more actively engaged in their education.

She is effusive about their efforts and the positive impact BDS has had on students living in Baltimore City. “At BDS, we’re not only working to make design education more effective, we’re learning to make it more effective and meaningful to students who often live in poverty,” Carroll explained. “When you see that light bulb go off because a student finds a skill they’re really good at—that, to me, is real art.”
Carroll also happily points out that the MICA community has been invested in the BDS from its beginning. Former President Fred Lazarus served as one of the founding board members, and additional support came from administration and the MAT program; alumni not only are on faculty at BDS, but MAT candidates have completed their teaching internships at the school.

One of those former MAT students and current BDS teachers, Megan Harris ’11, ’12 (Graphic Design BFA, MAT), is currently collaborating with Carroll on a study to help rewrite the middle school design curriculum. The pair conducted a group session with other teachers to discuss projects and brainstorm, and this spring, gave those teachers ideas to make the curriculum more consistent from classroom to classroom.

Harris lauds Carroll’s dedication, saying, “Karen spends a lot of thought on BDS, and you can see it in her every action. She will text me in the middle of the night, asking, ‘have you thought of this?’ She is so dedicated.” That dedication, Harris says, is fueling not only the curriculum at BDS, but is now being implemented elsewhere in the country.

She has always wanted what’s best for me as a person, not just as a professional teacher in the arts. She is like that with everyone.

SHYLA RAO ’97 / MAT
DIRECTOR OF THE MA IN TEACHING PROGRAM
She helps guide you through life, not just your job. It’s an incredible relationship, and it’s not one you find often in life. And I’m just one in hundreds she’s done this with.

MEGHANN HARRIS ’11, ’12 / GRAPHIC DESIGN BFA, MAT
Stacey Salazar, EdD ’00 (MAT), director of the Master of Arts in Art Education (MAAE) program, was awarded the 2015 National Art Education Manuel Barkan Award, which is given annually to an individual who publishes a product of scholarly merit in the field of art education. Salazar was recognized for her article, “Studio Interior: Investigating Undergraduate Studio Art Teaching and Learning,” which explores the lack of research in undergraduate art education.

Published in Studies in Art Education in 2013, Salazar’s article contends that what is taught and learned in contemporary undergraduate studio classrooms is largely unknown due to a dearth of research into the subject. She describes several cultural phenomena that suggest an urgent need for research of college studio art pedagogy, including one concerning an intense debate taking place within the art community itself: what is the nature and purpose of an undergraduate art education?

Salazar is the second member of the MICA graduate community in recent years to receive the prestigious honor. In 2013, Juan Carlos Castro, PhD ’99 ’00 (MAT, Photography BFA) was awarded the Barkan Award for his research into teenager learning and social media, outlined in a 2012 article published in Studies in Art Education.

An alumna of MICA’s Master of Arts in Teaching program, Salazar also holds a Doctorate of Education in Art and Art Education from Columbia University Teachers College, an MFA in Painting from Towson University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Arts from Randolph-Macon College.

MICA’s MAAE program is a low-residency online program which integrates students’ work as artists, teachers, and researchers.

And Carroll’s role as a mentor is just as evident at BDS as it is at MICA and across the country.

“MICA is close to BDS, and Karen’s office here at the College is next to mine,” Rao said. “I often see teachers from BDS visiting her. I know that, like she does with me, Karen is supporting them not just in their work at BDS, but in their personal professional and life goals.”

When Carroll joined MICA in 1987, she took over as chair of the art education department from Dr. Al Hurwitz ’41. Hurwitz, who developed MICA’s MAT program—the first such of its kind in the United States—was considered one of the foremost art educators in the country at the time. Carroll worked with Hurwitz to coordinate a nationally recognized team of faculty, create innovative graduate level programs for art teachers, and introduced ground-breaking research to the field. She also helped create an internationally renowned advisory board for MICA’s Center for Art Education.

Even though she will soon hand stewardship of art education programs at MICA over to a new leader, Carroll has no intention of leaving the College or her former students and colleagues behind. After taking a sabbatical when she steps down as dean, she said she’d like to “find a course or two” to teach at MICA, stay involved with research in the field, and continue writing books, including a history of art education at the College.

Harris, for one, is sure that her mentor will continue to be actively engaged with art education professionals everywhere. As she explained, “Karen can best be summed up by what we affectionately call her at BDS: Art Mama. You see it at national conference, when young teachers flock around her. She asks, ’How can I help you?’ She helps guide you though life, not just your job. It’s an incredible relationship, and its not one you find often in life. And I’m just one in hundreds she’s done this with.”
DIAMOND JAMES
MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART
MA 2016 CANDIDATE / SOCIAL DESIGN
JANUARY 2016

We were encouraged to go “beyond the bubble.” In late August, MICA’s president, Samuel Hoi, encouraged an auditorium full of graduate students to move beyond the comforts of campus to explore Baltimore. He challenged us to break the artificial bubble engulfing the institution’s halls, nearby coffee shops, and our studios that would become like a second home to many of us throughout our tenures at MICA. It almost seems odd that President Hoi would motivate adults to do something that one would assume as rote to many after moving to a new city as undergraduates.

When we were undergraduates, with clumsy duffels and rolling luggage, we left our teary-eyed parent behind at airport departure zones so many times before this meeting at the end of the summer. We are not fish-out-of-water, unworldly 18 year olds, but many of us are seasoned professionals looking to learn and develop in specialized fields of study. However, four months later, I now understand that President Hoi’s encouragement should not have been taken as obvious, but rather as a novel opportunity to interact with the city that is often a faded backdrop to the renowned academic institutions set here. This is Baltimore, and we should allow the complexities and character of this city to influence what we make, create, and design.

At the end of November, I co-hosted an open forum about being a black professional in design at MICA. I posed a question to the audience that seemed the antithesis of what President Hoi imploded months before. Is it OK to ignore Baltimore? The crowd full of Baltimore residents and MICA students, alumni, and faculty, sat as several outspoken members gave a resounding answer of “No.” It is a completely ridiculous thought at first, but it is easy to embark on an academic journey that is completely confined to the fortresses designated as “safe” university spaces and free campus shuttles. As makers, artists, and designers we can easily work with blinders on, creating a tunnel with vision where we choose to see only the familiar comforts of privilege, and the unfamiliar becomes different, and then “other”—and finally invisible.

Because this insidious pattern is common to many universities, it is imperative that institutions connect with residents of the city in which they are located. It is particularly important for institutions that focus on developing future social change agents, social entrepreneurs, and social innovators, such as MICA and other leading schools in Baltimore. Students and residents typically move through the city independently, which widens existing divides often based on race and socioeconomic status.

In addition to sponsoring dialogue by inviting city residents into traditionally exclusive spaces, many campuses have made efforts to get students learning outside the classroom and into the community. MICA has an Office Of Community Engagement and other schools have similar programs. These types of programs often follow the core tenet of “service-learning.” I am inspired by great intentions by the students and universities, but I am challenged by how authentic connections might ultimately be for participants.

To move past the universities’ good intentions for connectivity, I ask what is the exchange between students and community members in the “service-learning” paradigm? The exchange should not only be volunteer hours and credits earned. As university students, it is helpful to acknowledge that community engagement can appear charitable, paternalistic, and patronizing if we are not mindful of privilege.

As I think about this issue, I am reminded of a text from which I would like to make this concept parallel. In Paulo Freire’s book Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he critiques traditional frameworks for student-teacher relationships and what he terms “banking.” According to Freire, banking in school happens as “education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositors and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.” As I apply this concept to the issue of connection between universities and communities, the students are Freire’s teachers depositing and community residents are the students. The author continues to explain “in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry.”

This is not a critique of the “service-learning” model. It is an exploration of how those privileged at universities might want to dive deeper into authentically engaging Baltimore residents. I think it is important to think about these nuances of “reaching across the table,” or “giving back” when there are existing racial and socioeconomic differences between the majority of a university’s students and a community. As I examine this issue, I ask: Are institutions preparing students to give a one-way transfer of “help” to those in need or are people learning to form relationships and building empathy for co-creation?

Co-creation is paramount in a world where institutions thrive through the burgeoning fields centered around social design and innovation for addressing systemic challenges. Inside of connections with the community, collaboration with, and ultimately for, the people living in cities where students develop into empathetic, mindful professionals is critical. Good intentions in connecting the university to the community fall short when engagement is only about volunteering and superficial rhetoric of “making a difference” for credit. For institutions and their students to stop there is short-sighted.

It is about working with the people of the city to inform our practices. It is about bursting the bubble, learning to relate to people with different, but valuable, lived experiences. It is about listening to frustrations so as informed professionals, we can design for real people, not theoretical composites based on statistics or assumptions. True collaboration for better interventions for social change, visibility, and social justice comes from authentic and transparent dialogue that builds rapport. Rapport builds relationships and relationships build empathy. From empathy, there is opportunity for transformative art and design.
A CONVERSATION

with

SHINIQUE SMITH

ACRYLIC, FABRIC, INK, AND PAPER COLLAGE CAPTIVATINGLY INTERWEAVE TO CREATE AN EXUBERANT PAINTING. THIS VIVID IMAGERY IS THAT OF MICA ALUMNA, BOARD MEMBER, AND CONTEMPORARY ARTIST SHINIQUE SMITH ’92, ’03 (GENERAL FINE ARTS BFA, MOUNT ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART MFA). SINCE HER MATRICULATION AS AN UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE COLLEGE, THE BALTIMORE NATIVE AND UPSTATE NEW YORK-BASED CREATIVE HAS Risen TO CRITICAL SUCCESS.

(Continued)
You attended local art institutions Baltimore School for the Arts for high school and MICA for college. How early in life did you discover the value of the arts?

SS

I was introduced to the arts when I was about four years old. My mother always strived to expose me to art and culture in my youth. Then, my mom was taking art classes and was really into fashion. My first contact with art was ballet. I took ballet classes and went to summer camps that had theater and visual arts when I was little.
C O

Growing up in Baltimore, was there an experience while a youth or young adult that influenced your artwork?

There were multiple experiences that influenced me. What pops into mind as far as things that were inspiring to me visually was living in Edmondson Village. Growing up, there used to be this giant mural you could see when driving down Edmondson Avenue towards Route 40 of two men playing chess. Seeing that mural regularly was inspiring. On that same route going towards downtown, there was another mural of a man planting a tree that I would see. Also, just making art was impactful. My mom and I used to go to Robert E. Lee Park or the Cylburn Arboretum and color and just be out in that bit of nature.

My arts education was equally as important. Getting into the Baltimore School for the Arts was a big deal. Classes that I took there and my Foundation courses at MICA gave me a solid core and a classical understanding of making art and art history. When I was at the Baltimore School for the Arts, my mom encouraged me to take summer courses at MICA. So between ninth and tenth grade, I took MICA’s portfolio prep with students about to enter college and that was influential. While at the Baltimore School for the Arts, I wrote graffiti with my friends and they are great artists who still inspire me. Those experiences directly influence my work today.

You also attended Trinity School and Park School of Baltimore as well as Frederick Douglass High School. Please share your journey from Douglass to MICA.

I finished my high school education at Douglass. When I transferred there, I started mid-year as a junior and the principal, who was amazing, said, “You have enough credits to be a senior if you want to take classes during lunch and on Saturdays.” So I did, and I graduated when I was 16. My friends were still in high school when I began at MICA with a scholarship I earned through Douglass High School.

How important is your environment or surroundings to your paintings, sculptures, videos, and installations?

I am inspired and influenced by everything around me. I live in the country (Upstate New York) and I’m now surrounded by more nature than urban environment. I grew up and I’ve practically lived my whole life in the city and traveled to different countries and cities that have influenced me.

Household objects, past experiences, the human environment, and the spaces we inhabit are part of what inspires me. The spaces that we inhabit, the way we decorate them, how we dress ourselves and move in the world, and how these things might connect visually and conceptually are important to my work. I use objects, such as clothing and fabric, toys, paper, flattened cans, jewelry, stickers, and posters in my work, which are collected from everywhere I go. But that kind of aesthetic did form while I was in Baltimore.

Within education, art is an essential — it’s a bridge to empathy, understanding, and expressing one’s voice.

1

BALF VARIANT
NO. 0023, 2014
Clothing, fabric, ribbon, yarn, and twine on wood frame
Courtesy of the Artist and David Castillo Gallery
Photo credit: Adam Reich

2

INNER CLOCK, 2014
Ink, acrylic, fabric and paper collage, ribbon, and found objects on wood panel
Courtesy of the Artist and David Castillo Gallery
Photo credit: Adam Reich
YOU SAID YOU'RE INSPIRED BY THE VAST NATURE OF THINGS THAT WE CONSUME AND DISCARD. WHAT STORY DOES YOUR WORK TELL? CAN YOU EXPLAIN THESE REOCCURRING THEMES IN YOUR WORK?

My work is not necessarily narrative, but individual works have their own story through the objects that are used and the way that they are put together. Overall, there may be a story of me in each of my pieces because they are so much my hands and thought process, and I choose these things based on associations that I’m seeing. I also have a somewhat romantic notion that we’re all connected through these things and I work on imbuing my work with these ideas. Maybe, for myself as an artist, I’m pursuing this line of thinking and process of working to explore ways of enlightening myself.

WHAT WAS YOUR UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE LIKE AT MICA?

MICA undergrad for me was about finding myself and what direction I wanted to go with as far as the arts, and laying a foundation for the ability to go in different directions. At MICA, there is a major called General Fine Arts, which allows you to create your own program. The courses I chose were mostly involved with drawing. But I also took a required 3D course and a painting course.

Justice is truly required to right years of wrongs and inequities that precipitate unrest. However, art can indeed be powerful and has the potential in general to distill everything that is happening in our society and communicate it to a broad audience to promote a deeper understanding of the world. I think the best art doesn't preach the truth, but encourages viewers to discover what truth is on their own.

Within education, art is an essential — it’s a bridge to empathy, understanding, and expressing one’s voice. It can bring people, politics, and poetics together. It’s an important vehicle to nurture and empower young people.

In Philadelphia, I have a mural project at a recreation center that I’ve turned into an outdoor performance space. I brought in a spoken word artist to work with the students and they performed the poetry they’d written. I’m expanding the project this summer and bringing in some other artists to work with kids on race, media, citizenship, and truth with the goal of providing a space for them to share their creative voice.

Art can indeed be powerful and has the potential in general to distill everything that is happening in our society and communicate it to a broad audience to promote a deeper understanding of the world.
My most affecting classes were in collage and assemblage, and senior courses where I could explore my own mind and ideas in different material ways, whether it was drawing, painting, or installation. Having the criticism and guidance of senior advisors was important for developing my voice, and I did experiment with installation, fabric, and objects, and I feel like I’ve finally figured out how I realize some of the ideas I had then. The program gave me room to fail and figure things out with guidance and support.

Also in those days, Leslie King-Hammond’s courses were the only courses that engaged with women and African-American art history, which were enlightening, but there was much that I had to search out on my own, too.

After receiving your undergraduate degree at the college, you returned for graduate school. Please share your time in the multidisciplinary Mount Royal School of Art program.

I was away from Baltimore and MICA for 10 years before I came back for grad school, and in between I worked in film production, including on a John Waters and a Barry Levinson film and others around the Baltimore/Washington area before moving to Seattle where I started and ran a Black film festival for five years.

When I came back to MICA, I had been working at Walters Art Museum and had just completed a Master of Arts in teaching at Tufts University and The Museum School in Boston, where I taught at a high school for the arts like the one I attended and took courses in development theory. This experience made me realize that I needed to make art my full-time endeavor.

I came back to MICA because of the encouragement of my mentor, Jan Stinchcomb. She was working with the summer MFA program along with Dennis Farber and Timothy App. I began developing my new path in painting and explored different directions under their guidance and got into Mount Royal with their support.

Mount Royal was a great program where I began relationships with artists and kindred spirits that continue to have a significant and positive role in my life and in my work. I know all the different graduate programs are more interdisciplinary now, but at the time they were just beginning to be more open and Mount Royal was truly interdisciplinary.

With recent conversations on the value of an arts education, how do you define success personally?

I’ve had a long history with MICA from high school to graduate school to now, and I love seeing how the school grows and evolves with the times and the needs of the student body. It’s developing as a focal point in the community, which I’d like to contribute to as well. Instead of just being there, there’s just so much potential to be a positive contributor to Baltimore. I think Fred [Lazarus IV] started that, and Sammy [Hoi] is expanding where that can go.

Art education is important. Does one need to go to school to be an artist?

No. Though, when one does go to art school, you have access to facilities and different ways of making from print-making to photography to community engagement. I’m still learning from the people that I went to school with. You go forth into the world from graduation with a group of people who know where you started as an artist and support your dream.

I graduated from Mount Royal in 2003, and I can still talk to these people and show them the work I’m doing now, and they know my history and give feedback. It’s hard to get that when you don’t go to school, to develop a community of peers and mentors. So art education is important for that, too.
MICA artists give voice to Baltimore’s Korean community
MICA ARTISTS GIVE VOICE TO BALTIMORE’S KOREAN COMMUNITY

MICA doesn’t exist in a vacuum. Members of the MICA community live, work, and create among diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. One such group, Baltimore’s Korean community, stands out as one that may not be familiar to everyone in the Baltimore area. But now, through artistic expression, a number of MICA artists are looking to change that.

Aletheia Shin ’15 (Community Arts MFA), was surprised to discover so many Korean small business owners in Baltimore. As she began to talk to them and listen to their stories, she realized that their voices needed to be elevated. Shin’s work with the Onngi Project led to the creation of Pop-Up Korea Town, a three-day pop-up exhibition/event in Station North in which the seniors’ Onngi vessels were showcased.

Shin’s work is also where Shin met Michelle Lee, a senior accountant in MICA’s finance office. Both noticed that in the aftermath of the Baltimore Uprising last spring, relationships between Korean Americans and African Americans had soured, with many Korean shop owners having experienced damage to their businesses as a result of the rioting. The two joined forces to create “The BMORE Seoul to Soul” series of concerts, a combination of Korean and African-American song and dance performances “meant to bridge cultural gaps in our diverse community,” Lee said. The most recent concert, held at MICA in December, displayed art works by MICA faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the Baltimore community.

To give Baltimore’s Korean community a voice, Shin designed and facilitated the Onngi Project. First-generation Korean immigrants at the Greenmount Senior Center in Station North came together to explore their past and present journey living as Koreans in Baltimore. Each senior created an Onngi vessel—a storage container commonly used in Korea—that embodied that individual’s reflections on his or her experiences as a Korean immigrant.

“Onngi Project grounds and connects Korean immigrants to the world they live in now, while also raising awareness of the long-standing, yet untold presence of the Korean community in Baltimore,” Shin said. “It serves as a call to action for the ‘silent community’ of Korean people in Baltimore to speak and be heard.”

GAIA ’11 (Interdisciplinary Sculpture BFA) has also been intrigued by the relationship between Korean Americans and other groups. He is most interested in the trinity relationship between African Americans, Korean Americans, and the artist community, which he says is predominantly white. One way he has explored that dynamic is by working with Korean Americans on murals painted on the walls of Korean-American stores. In one particular instance, he reached out to a woman whose store had been burned during the Baltimore Uprising. He wanted the piece to shed light on the conflict and bitterness that have erupted from “economic and cultural circumstances that make Koreans open stores in black neighborhoods,” he says.

For Mina Cheon ’99 (Hoffberger MFA), faculty member at MICA, it is crucial to pave the way for more artists within the Korean community. Cheon, along with Gabriel Kroiz, chair and associate professor of Undergraduate Design for Morgan State University’s School of Architecture and Planning, co-owns a studio building called K-Town Studios located near Baltimore’s ‘Little Korea.’ K-Town Studios gives local artists a space to produce art and design projects that are showcased from Baltimore to Korea, Cheon said. “Today’s artists are charged as agents of change,” Cheon said. “Our K-Town Studios projects are related to Korea and the world at large as we address issues of sustainability, equity, human rights, and social justice.”
While they go about it in different ways, all of these artists show the power of art to build bridges to bring communities together. With art, we are able to create a space for dialog and a space for contemplation.
One of the most striking things about visiting the Fred Lazarus IV Studio Center for Graduate Studies is how vibrant the spaces are. There’s an energy found in the Center’s studios, classrooms, and lounges—and on the streets outside, in the surrounding Station North Arts and Entertainment District.

Walking through this neighborhood, past the Lazarus Center’s street-facing Riggs gallery, you hear a buoyant hum coming from the adjoining, pocket-sized café, Nancy. You see a steady stream of people crossing back and forth across North Avenue to visit Red Emma’s Bookstore and Coffeehouse, or run into Baltimore Bicycle Works, or stop for lunch at one of the area’s eclectic mix of restaurants. There’s the JHU-MICA Film Centre, a jewelry center, art house movie theater, an array of music venues, and fixed and pop-up galleries, and on every corner there’s a pulsating sense that things are happening here.

And though the Station North area has transformed tremendously over the past decade, that change has not meant beautification and gentrification as commonly seen elsewhere. The neighborhood is not home to big box chain stores nor has it seen architectural gems turned into high-priced condominiums. It is real and sometimes gritty, hopeful and confident, and most of all, it is a community where MICA’s graduate students play a vital role.

Among those are the dedicated members of MICA’s Grad Ex committee, a graduate student-run organization whose growth has mirrored that of the neighborhood it calls home. The committee was established formally in 2012, when a growing number of MICA’s graduate programs moved into the newly renovated Lazarus Center.

As Patrick Galluzzo ’14 (Photography and Electronic Media MFA), one of the organization’s first leaders, explained, “Grad Ex was founded when the Lazarus Center reopened. The committee evolved from a previous group of students who held exhibitions in the old Studio Center, as the building was known before. With the renovation came new exhibition spaces and a more formal approach to securing graduate exhibitions around the MICA campus.”

Initially led by Tony Ransom ’13 (Rinehart MFA), Ben Andrews ’13 (Mount Royal MFA), Greg Walker ’14 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA), and Chris Cheng ’14 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA) along with Galluzzo, participation in Grad Ex waxed and waned over the first two years depending on interest from first-year students and the hectic schedules of second-year MFA candidates working on their thesis shows. Still, during its first two years of existence, Grad Ex curated 20 exhibitions in gallery spaces across MICA and held a handful of graduate student film screenings.

(Continued)
Since then, participation in Grad Ex has grown and the organization has evolved. Today, it is not focused solely on traditional exhibitions but also on providing platforms for the larger community to engage through the appreciation of art and sharing of ideas. Grad Ex exhibitions have also spread beyond MICA’s campus into venues and spaces throughout Station North.

Heather Braxton ’16 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA) and Andrew Keiper ’16 (Photographic and Electronic Media MFA) are among the graduate students helming Grad Ex today. The pair agrees that Grad Ex is a positive force in the graduate community.

“Other students get excited about what we’re doing — solo shows, group shows, artist talks open to the community — we have a group following,” Braxton said. “Grad Ex is very much run in a co-op manner. Everyone involved has authority for how the group works and decisions are made by majority vote.

“The great strength of Grad Ex is that students get the experience of putting together an exhibition,” Keiper added. “They are allowed to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes, without the supervision of a director and pressure of formal critique—but with the pressure of a public who will see the work they put together.”

Keiper, who had a solo exhibition curated through Grad Ex in fall 2015, knows firsthand how this kind of experience can impact the way an artist works. He created a political piece for the show, a choice that came with challenges not experienced in his program of study.
The great strength of Grad Ex is that students get the experience of putting together an exhibition. They are allowed to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes, without the supervision of a director and pressure of formal critique—but with the pressure of a public who will see the work they put together.

Andrew Keiper '16 | Photographing and Electronic Media MFA

His work’s subject matter—the death of Freddie Gray and the subsequent Baltimore Uprising—also complemented Grad Ex’s ongoing work to facilitate community discourse and idea sharing through art.

Keiper, who lives in an East Baltimore neighborhood where he has observed systematic racism less apparent in other parts of the city, got involved with protests surrounding Gray’s death early on. And as he began putting together his show, called Rough Ride, he wanted to convey the intensity of events to people who were not closely involved.

Noting that those events had a “major sonic element,” the artist put together a work using the sounds of a rough ride—a vehicle’s engine turning, wheels rolling along pavement, and loud, violent strikes against a hard surface—folded over the noise of other events, including the sound of protestor chants, the incessant whir of overhead helicopters, and the voices of politicians and media commentators as they opined about events unfolding in Baltimore.
We worked tirelessly on Tracing Fictions, and applied for a graduate pop-up fund. We got that funding and also found sponsorship and support within the local community beyond MICA.

HEATHER BRAXTON ’16 | PHOTOGRAPHIC AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA MFA
"I knew Rough Ride would be provocative, so I had to think about how I staged it," he said. Reaction was intense, but Keiper emphasized that the experience was invaluable. "It confronted the public nature of artmaking in a way that is very different from the nature of critique with faculty and peers. Everybody knows your work, they know your motives, and hopefully they like you," he explained. "The public doesn’t bring that knowledge to your show, and that changed the way that I work. That is one of the major benefits Grad Ex offers."

In addition to bringing challenging ideas to the community, the committee has extended exhibitions beyond MICA’s galleries into venues dotting the surrounding Station North neighborhood.

Grad Ex’s first venture outside of campus, Tracing Fictions, was held last spring at the Station North Chicken Box. The group show featured the work of 15 students representing seven of MICA’s graduate programs.

Braxton noted, "That was one of the most exciting things I’ve been involved with in Grad Ex. We worked tirelessly on Tracing Fictions, and applied for a graduate pop-up fund. We got that funding and also found sponsorship and support within the community beyond MICA—by local businesses Union Brewery and Park Avenue Café. It ended up being very successful, and it was the biggest exhibition Grad Ex ever put together."

Currently, Braxton and Keiper are working with a mix of first-year graduate students on the transition of the committee as they and the other second-year students in Grad Ex prepare to graduate.

"I came here and saw that I could help with these exhibition opportunities, and it was great to find myself working with a group of like-minded people. And now we’re building something for students yet to come," Keiper said. “Grad Ex brought me into intimate contact with students from other programs and inspired a lot of inter-program discourse and energy.”

Braxton added, “Having everyone in the same building—this graduate community in the Lazarus Center—we have more interactions than we would have elsewhere. We’ve built a very strong community, and we’ve added, I think, to the neighborhood. Being able to build a network beyond your program is critical for discourse in art. It has definitely strengthened my studies and work.”
A CAREER DEFINED BY RETHINKING THE NORM
In 1996, George Ciscle retired for the first time. Founder of Baltimore's Contemporary Museum—an "un-museum" that turned existing conventions for exhibiting art on their head—the longtime curator decided it was time to step down from his role as the organization's director. Unsure of what his next steps would be, Ciscle planned on taking a rest while he contemplated his future.

But when his pending retirement was announced in a local newspaper, then-MICA President Fred Lazarus was prompted to pick up the phone and give Ciscle a call. "He wanted to know whether I had made my decision on my next step, and if I hadn't, he wanted to be the first person I spoke to," Ciscle recalled.

The result of that call? A short-lived rest for Ciscle and a 20-year relationship that benefited not only MICA and its students, but helped establish the unique, DIY culture that defines Baltimore's arts scene today. And while that affiliation will never end, it will be changing this year when Ciscle retires for the second time, stepping down from his current role as director of MICA's MFA in Curatorial Practice program.

Ciscle started his career at MICA as a guest curator, where he worked with 12 students on an Elizabeth Talford Scott exhibition. The lessons he taught during that first collaboration—about the importance of looking at the relationship between an artist's work and the larger community, and what it meant to reach out to audiences outside of the arts world—had long been hallmarks of his work. The Contemporary, for example, was a museum without walls largely focused on bringing artwork to people's everyday lives. Ciscle wanted to instill this mindset in his students at MICA.

The role of guest curator evolved into a curator-in-residence position, which allowed Ciscle to formalize his teachings with the creation of the Exhibition Development Seminar (EDS). That yearlong course offering—which remains popular today—allows students to learn the ins and outs of putting on an exhibition while they explore imaginative ways to connect the exhibition's work with the world outside of MICA.

The exhibitions Ciscle produced through EDS since 1997 include Joyce J. Scott: Kickin' It with the Old Masters, which took place at The Baltimore Museum of Art and traveled to 10 museums nationwide; The Marlborough Art Project, which took place at the landmark Marlborough Apartments in MICA's Bolton Hill neighborhood; and At Freedom's Door: Challenging Slavery in Maryland, which was held at the Maryland Historical Society and Reginald F. Lewis Museum.

Over the years, Ciscle noticed that many MICA students participating in EDS began to consider career options other than that of exhibiting artist or designer. Some started to imagine what it would be like to be a curator or educator working in a museum or the founder of a community-based arts center. The idea of creating a program to help those students achieve such goals took hold.

Largely in answer to student response to EDS, the College launched the MFA in Curatorial Practice program, the first MFA of its kind in the country. While many other programs focus on exhibition, MICA's curatorial practice program asks the question "what does it mean to have an audience?" "This makes us unique," Ciscle said, pointing out that students have to be creative in order to develop accessible exhibitions in venues that are both traditional and nontraditional. As he asked, "why would your grandmother want to come to this exhibition?" That simple question inspires his students to find innovative ways to spread the reach of art throughout the community.

Watching those students grow their creativity, critical thinking skills, and confidence has been the most gratifying aspect of Ciscle's time at MICA. "My joy is being able to be an audience member to those who have a vision—the curators and the artists and designers," he said.

Though he is stepping down as director of the MFA program, Ciscle will continue at MICA on a part-time basis until May 2017. He is proud of what he has accomplished, but he believes it is time for a new director to take the program to the next level. The way he sees it, curatorial practice's future comes down to three questions: "What is it in the first five years that we were able to achieve, what is it that we still haven't achieved, and what is it we've never thought about?"

Like déjà vu, Ciscle is once again preparing to take a rest before deciding what to do next. "It's time to look at other ways of service," he said. "I'm in the process of discovering what that will mean."
AWARDS & RECOGNITION

WINDGATE MUSEUM
INTERN GRANT

CHRISSIE
MILLER ’16
CURATORIAL PRACTICE MFA
—
Miller is the recipient of the Windgate Museum Intern grant from the Center for Creativity, Craft, and Design. Miller is interning with MICA’s Exhibition Department on Queer Threads, an exhibition seeking to highlight the work of Baltimore fiber and textile artists exploring themes of identity, gender, family, and culture.

10TH INTERNATIONAL
DRAWING ANNUAL

RICARDO
NUNEZ ’16
ILLUSTRATION PRACTICE MFA
—
Nunez was selected for inclusion in The 10th International Drawing Annual produced by the Manifest Creative Research Gallery and Drawing Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. The publication will include 127 works by 84 artists.

CLINTON GLOBAL
INITIATIVE UNIVERSITY

KAYLA INGRAM ’16
+ KRISTIN MCCALL-KILEY ’16
+ JUSTIN WUETCHER ’17
+ CAITLIN WEBER ’16
SOCIAL DESIGN MA

MIKE WEIKERT ’06
GRAPHIC DESIGN MFA
Co-director
Social Design MA

Ingram, McCall-Kiley, Wuetcher, and Weber have been selected to attend the annual Clinton Global Initiative University (CGIU) to be held at UC Berkeley from April 1-3, 2016. Projects submitted by the four Social Design students were selected from among thousands of peer projects from colleges and universities across the nation and globe. In addition, Weikert, Social Design program founder and co-director, has been invited to attend as a faculty network representative. MICA was one of the first design schools to be represented in this prestigious event, and this is Social Design’s fourth year with representation at CGIU.

CHRIS MILLER ’16
Queer House of Brooklyn

LEAH MIRIAM COOPER ’14
Hannah, from Ghosts in My Own Space
AWARDS & RECOGNITION

IN THE MEDIA

LEAH MIRIAM COOPER ’14
PHOTOGRAPHIC AND ELECTRONIC MEDIA MFA

ELLEN LUPTON & JENNIFER COLE PHILLIPS
Graphic Design MFA

Co-directors

Cooper was featured on CNN for her thesis project, Projections and Resemblances, where she visually connects images of herself and distant relatives with the aid of old family photographs. Since her graduation, Cooper’s thesis has received numerous exhibition opportunities and awards, and has been referenced in many publications.

Graphic Design: The New Basics, co-authored by Graphic Design MFA co-directors Lupton and Phillips, has been named a top 25 design book of 2015 by Print magazine.

In addition, MICA was ranked the third best design school for graphic design by the Animation Career Review. MICA placed in the top five for its reputation in academics, admissions standards, and value as it relates to tuition and indebtedness.

SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB FELLOWSHIPS

DEMI CANTY ’16

+ JULIA PASSIK ’16
SOCIAL DESIGN MA

Canty and Passik were selected as 2016 The Social Innovation Lab (SIL) fellows. SIL, at Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures, is an early-stage incubator providing support to innovative nonprofits, mission-driven companies, and disruptive technologies. The Fellowship, now in its second year, provides a stipend for two current MASD students to work with the SIL team to provide mentoring and design support to the SIL cohort of early-stage social ventures.

LIGHT CITY BALTIMORE FESTIVAL 2016

KYLE MILLER

+ TIM SCOFIELD ’07
RINEHART SCHOOL OF SCULPTURE MFA

+ ROBBY RACKLEFF ’09
MOUNT ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART MFA

+ RACHEL GUARDIOLA ’15
MOUNT ROYAL SCHOOL OF ART MFA

+ SARAH TOOLEY ’09
COMMUNITY ARTS MFA

+ ASHLEY MOLESE ’14
CURATORIAL PRACTICE MFA

Six alumni of MICA’s graduate programs—including Miller and Scofield, Rackleff, Guardiola, Tooley, and Molese—will have works featured in the inaugural Light City Baltimore festival, from March 28 – April 3. Featuring light-based artwork, music, and innovation, Light City is the first large-scale international light festival in the United States. Of the 47 artists taking place in the festival, 16 hail from MICA’s graduate, undergraduate, and faculty community.

AIGA BLUE RIDGE FLUX DESIGN COMPETITION

HIEU TRAN ’14
POST-BACCALAUREATE CERTIFICATE IN GRAPHIC DESIGN

ELAINE LIN ’16
GRAPHIC DESIGN MFA

—

Tran and Lin were both a double winner in AIGA Blue Ridge’s annual Flux design competition. Tran’s designs, Mercado Perfume and Urban Guild, and Lin’s work, Biodiagram: Facebook Activity and Outcast, were among 173 projects selected for the honor by a jury of the design industry’s creative professionals.


THE ART OF URBAN ENVIRONMENT
COMMUNITY ARTS MFA STUDENTS HELP SHED LIGHT ON TOXIC CONDITIONS IN EAST BALTIMORE
COMMUNITY ARTS
MFA STUDENTS HELP
SHED LIGHT ON TOXIC
CONDITIONS IN EAST
BALTIMORE

Years before lead-contaminated water in the city of Flint, Michigan, turned a national spotlight on issues of urban neglect, the environment, and public health, East Baltimore activist Glenn Ross was working day and night to educate others on those same issues. And while the self-proclaimed “Urban Environmentalist” didn’t immediately see the association between urban concerns — such as poverty, crime, and lack of access to education — and the environmental movement, he knows that on the streets of Baltimore today, the two are fundamentally intertwined.

For years, residents in neglected areas of the city have faced health risks due to environmental disregard perpetuated by local institutions and governmental agencies, risks compounded by a lack of access to such basic needs as education, nutritional food, health care, and safety. Ross has spent much of his life working to improve these conditions. A decade ago, he founded The Baltimore Toxic Tour, a classroom-on-wheels that explores the hazardous living conditions in East Baltimore.

Ross, who believes in the power of activism to create change, takes tour participants on a 90-minute bus ride through the city, where he points out and elaborates on a number of toxic locations—including brownfields, chemical plants, and sewage spills—exploring the history behind these locations and their disproportionate impact on low- and moderate-income, mostly minority residents.

Tour goers have included students from schools across the country, including the University of Pittsburgh, University of Seattle, University of Maryland, and Johns Hopkins University; politicians and educators; and students in MICA’s MFA in Community Arts program. And it is in those Community Arts students — whose graduate study centers on art’s power to inform, shift viewpoints, empower, and, yes, create change — that Ross has found dedicated, like-minded partners in his efforts to educate the public and sustain the life of The Baltimore Toxic Tour.
Working out of MICA PLACE (Programs Linking Art, Culture, and Education), a 108-year-old renovated school building located in economically challenged East Baltimore, students in the Community Arts program are helping create change—large and small—throughout the surrounding neighborhoods. These students can be found in local schools and churches, with youth and community programs, as they use their artmaking to help local residents improve their neighborhoods, break down cultural barriers, gain financial power, and, by collaborating with Ross, confront environmental racism and social injustice.

Recently, five Community Arts students teamed with Ross to help shed light on this important issue, including Jen Burt ’16, who explained, “The first few weeks of the Community Arts program are spent introducing students to East Baltimore as a place not only where MICA PLACE is located but also as the community with whom we’ll collaborate to complete our first year’s projects. Going on The Baltimore Toxic Tour acts as an essential part to this important introduction.”

Burt and fellow Community Arts student Hilary Rosensteel ’16 collaborated with Ross on their first-year MFA project, creating the “next step” for the tour. The project centered on ideas for growing and sustaining Ross’s effort, and the group looked to make the tour more accessible to local citizens and to connect participants with ongoing advocacy opportunities that can lead to a more equitable, healthy, and safe living environment in the East Baltimore community. The project culminated in a redesign of the Baltimore Toxic Tour website, which serves as a homebase for the tour that helps connect audiences to the tour itself, keeps participants up to date with opportunities to get involved with environmental activism efforts, and provides a public space for reflection.
Issues like those faced in Flint and in East Baltimore stay hidden to protect those at fault, at the cost to those whose lives are on the line every day. The only way these injustices are going to be addressed is if the people experiencing them say something and are heard. It’s about the community coming together to demand answers and actions.

JEN BURT ’16 | COMMUNITY ARTS MFA
Yihui Wang ’16, artist-in-residence at Henderson-Hopkins Public Charter School in East Baltimore, is using her artmaking to shed light on The Baltimore Toxic Tour’s subject matter through an environmentally-based public art installation. Through conversations with Ross, Wang discovered that an area behind the Henderson-Hopkins’ playground is heavily polluted. Despite the ground’s contamination, area children still use the area to cut through from one street to another.

To bring awareness to this issue, Wang is working with multi-generational community members to create art installations in the field. Using waste wood, metal, stone, and recycled materials, the artist is creating a path through the field, with installations along the path highlighting wildlife, botany, and health. The largest installation will be between 10 and 14 feet high, allowing both Baltimore Toxic Tour participants and local residents to view the artwork and learn more about pollution in the neighborhood.

Ross noted, “It’s one thing to take people on the tour and talk about what the contamination is. I want to take it even deeper to show people what types of illnesses and diseases you can get from this. I think when you bring it closer to home it makes people say ‘oh, no wonder my child has asthma. I’m living around this.’”

In reflecting about the work done by Community Arts students to shed light on environmental problems in the city and in other urban areas, Burt said that community organizing is essential. “There’s a lot to be said about the crisis in Flint, but at its core is the absolute essentiality of community organizing—the necessity of people coming together when facing adversity,” she stressed. “Issues like those faced in Flint and in East Baltimore stay hidden to protect those at fault, at the cost to those whose lives are on the line every day. The only way these injustices are going to be addressed is if the people experiencing them say something and are heard. It’s about the community coming together to demand answers and actions.”

To learn more about the Baltimore Toxic Tour, visit baltimoretoxictour.org or email baltimoretoxictour@gmail.com

“With his thirty plus years of work focused on environmental racism in East Baltimore, Glenn has been a strong community partner with the Community Arts program. That relationship, along with the focus of his work, drew me into this project,” Burt said. “Through my community arts work, I find it important to unearth realities like the systematic oppression. In collaborating with Glenn, I felt I could contribute to achieving greater awareness about these issues and the possibilities of change.”

Two additional Community Arts students, Kristen Brown ’16 and Aaron Goldman ’16, were inspired to use their artmaking to support Ross after taking the tour with classmates when they first entered the MFA program. Their effort, Seeds for Change: An Activity Book on Environmental Justice, is a youth based activity/coloring book based on the 17 principles of environmental justice set by the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Seventeen local Baltimore artists, who each illustrated one of the principles, where specifically included to showcase their talent, share their voices, and create a dialogue around these issues. And while it is geared toward children, Seeds of Change acts as a means for parents and educators to become involved in conversations around environmental justice.

“As community artists, Kristen and I were interested in working with Glenn not only to raise awareness about these issues, but to provide ways in which people could walk away with that raised awareness and be charged with action—having ideas of next steps they might take to address these issues,” Goldman said.

Research on the book project was in depth, and the pair worked with Ross to brainstorm ideas for the content of the book and to gather insight from other community organizers and environmental groups. They also researched other activity- and social justice-based children’s books, and used their own experiences living and working within the community in East Baltimore as inspiration for developing content for the book’s pages.

A release party for the book is planned for April, 2016, and the pair plans to distribute 500 copies of Seeds of change to schools, community associations, and local organization. As Brown explained, “Aaron and I are both teaching artists, so we have a great opportunity to get insight from youth about the effectiveness of the content.”
"What do you see as the major changes in art and design education and how do you see MICA responding to these changes?"

This is a question I think about a lot, not only as MICA’s new provost but also as someone with a long-standing interest in how human communities understand and adapt to changing conditions. And the more I think about it, the more I am convinced that this is probably the question we need to ask ourselves at this juncture in history, both as a leading institution of art and design education and as citizens committed to our collective future.

It is commonplace now to observe that the social, economic, and cultural context of higher education is undergoing tremendous change. While the conditions of this changing landscape are multiple and complex, they include at least the following:

- The globalization of higher education
- The rise of new digital technologies and media
- The emergence of new forms of enterprise and new kinds of work
- New definitions of the social purposes of higher education

Each of these trends represents a vast and complicated terrain. The first two—the globalization of higher education and the rise of new digital technologies and media—were part of a first wave of transformation that began in the 1990s. While they, too, continue to evolve, I want to focus on the last two, since these trends are more recent and represent major challenges for institutions of higher education as they are currently built, while also offering major opportunities for how we might rethink higher education in the future.

The emergence of new forms of enterprise and work is linked to these earlier trends of globalization and the rise of digital media. A few years ago, I worked on an economic revitalization project in Northern British Columbia, where the region’s economy is historically based on resource extraction, mostly wood and energy. Secondary manufacturing enterprises were difficult to sustain locally; it was cheaper to ship the raw materials closer to markets and closer to more abundant labor. We proposed the establishment of a center for secondary manufacturing that would work with the region’s indigenous population—which has a long history of traditional carving and craft production—to use contemporary 3D milling technologies to carve custom doors and market them internationally. The business’s core craft has a history extending across millennia, but the conditions for this as a viable form of economic activity have existed only for the last 10-15 years.

This is just one example of how the legacy knowledge and talent of a specific place can support globally-oriented enterprises that generate new forms of local economic activity. The possibility of working collaboratively with the City of Baltimore, local businesses, community organizations, and educational institutions to build economic capacity represents a great opportunity for MICA and Baltimore’s larger art and design community.

Over the past decade, the unique place occupied by colleges and universities in the collective imagination of the United States during most of the 20th century has begun to shift. Rising costs have placed public and political pressure on institutions to become clearer about educational objectives and more focused on professional preparation. In response, colleges and universities have worked to rethink and redefine their social purposes. The engagement movement has sought to re-establish the social compact between institutions of higher education and local communities—integrating the institutions’ life and work into the social, cultural, and economic revitalization of those communities and their surrounding urban environments.

Art and design institutions are well-placed to take on these challenges. We are not only critical and creative thinkers and makers, we are willing to rethink our own process and institutional form. More: we understand that our work happens in relationship to these larger contexts—not just of history, culture, and economics, but in relationship to the real lives of real people who are members of the communities in which we live and work.

This ability to reflect, rethink, and rework is our power as artists, designers, and scholars. It is what we expect of our students, and it is what we bring to this project of remaking our world.
CREATIVE: DESIGN ARMY
PROJECT MANAGER: MICHAEL WALLEY-RUND
WRITERS: LORRI ANGELLOZ, KIMBERLY HALLUMS, AND DIONNE MCCONKEY (EXCEPT WHERE NOTED)
PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS, WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BY ANDREW COPELAND ’13, PHYLYCIA GHEE ’10, ALEX GRABIEC ’16, NASREEN ISMAEL, KEI ITO ’16, ERIK KVALSVIK, CHRISTOPHER MYERS ’94, AND JOEY PULONE.

GRAFFITI ALLEY, BEHIND THE NEWLY RENOVATED MOTOR HOUSE (FORMERLY LOAD OF FUN) ACROSS NORTH AVENUE FROM MICA’S FRED LAZARUS IV CENTER FOR GRADUATE STUDIES.
At MICA’s ArtWalk you can

**DISCOVER:**
the next generation of up and coming artists and designers

**BE INSPIRED:**
talk directly with the most exceptionally talented students

**PURCHASE:**
artwork by both emerging and accomplished artists before prices soar

**PARTY:**
taste Baltimore’s Best Curated Food Trucks OR enjoy a buffet under the tent

**EXERCISE:**
Walk the most visually stunning 2-mile route through 7 art-filled MICA buildings

Visit mica.edu/artwalk for more information and to register.