

**To: Academic Review Office**  
**University of New Mexico**  
**From: Joyce M. Szabo**  
**Interim Chair, Department of Art and Art History**  
**Date: March 29, 2011**  
**Re: Response to External Review of the Department of Art and Art History**

As I was not chair at the time of the review and was, in fact, on sabbatical and resident on the East Coast, my only knowledge of the review comes from the team's report and from discussions that members of the department have had since the beginning of spring semester. Here I briefly augment some of former chair David Craven's comments by suggesting a few ways in which we can address some of the team's observations.

Most of the team's statements about what is vital to keep the Department of Art and Art History functioning with faculty, staff and graduate students of the caliber that quite clearly impressed them center on issues of funding. That facilities desperately need to be upgraded is obvious. Most of these upgrades, including fixing the roof, dealing with issues at graduate studios, and fixing others in classrooms will involve significant investments that neither the department nor the College of Fine Arts has available. The university has to help the department deal with these problems. One problem the team pointed out has been addressed through university funding. The large lecture hall in the Center for the Arts, room 2018, which the team had said provided fuzzy images and had many other problems, has been totally overhauled. This problem has, then, been addressed by the university.

Several times in the report the team praised some faculty members in Studio for their efforts to work together in a cross-disciplinary fashion. They also said that more such cooperation needs to occur, both for the sake of removing some of the territorial issues that some areas in Studio face but also in sending a clear message to graduate students that working in cross-disciplinary ways is not only possible but a great asset to an artist's development. A few weeks ago, the Studio faculty held what everyone with whom I have spoken has termed an extremely successful retreat, something that I think no one would say about other retreats held within recent memory. With members of faculty from diverse areas in Studio exchanging ideas, working together to revamp the introductory seminar for incoming graduate students, and mentor new faculty in ways that move beyond a single area of photography or sculpture, for example, the Studio faculty have made some important first steps in addressing some of the very issues that concerned the review team. We will continue to work on these issues, now that a dialogue has been established, and I am sure that more cooperation will occur.

The team was very pointed on a couple of issues that I feel must be addressed. They singled Arita porcelain out as being too focused on technique and not philosophically focused enough. I could not disagree with this any more firmly. The entire Arita process, a Japanese model, is deeply concerned with a philosophical and

aesthetic underpinning. Yes, mastering techniques is important in Artia, just as it is in any other Studio area, but none of our Studio areas is concerned solely with technique at the expense of aesthetic consideration; we are not a trade school. Even Art History requires that students master techniques such as formal analysis, but the area quickly moves to more complex issues of meaning, context, and artistic development, for example. Foundations in whatever techniques are vital to each area are necessary for students to progress in their creative work and study.

The review team sees the need for greater diversity among the faculty. I agree, and as we are poised to hopefully search for faculty positions next year, we can emphasize this need again to the search committees, the faculty as a whole, and to the graduate students, all of whom are involved to some degree in the selection process. We also need to add diversity to our graduate student population, although the review team seemed to think we were doing better there than with the faculty. One major issue that will impact our ability to attract and retain a diverse graduate student body is the issue of funding for graduate students. We are not competitive with other institutions that have much larger sources of funding; student morale is low. Our reputation as a department with a dedicated and innovative faculty can only carry us so far. We need to be able to provide more, not less, financial aid to graduate students. We will keep pushing this issue so that it remains in the forefront of the department's concerns as they are seen across campus.

Finally, the review team saw several areas within the department that are stretched too thinly. Painting and drawing recently lost a senior faculty member to retirement, and her line needs to be replaced. So, too, Photography lost a major figure in their area when Patrick Nagatani retired, and a successful search needs to be conducted there. We are losing one of our two faculty members in Sculpture to retirement at the end of this academic year, and the lone faculty member remaining is only in her second year here.

I have asked two different faculty members, one in Small Metals (an area closer to her own) and one in Electronic Arts who has a sculpture background but is also very cross-disciplinary in her manner of teaching to work with the newer faculty member on her way to tenure and promotion. The team also noted a significant gap in the curriculum that the Art History faculty are able to cover and advises the hiring of a Classical Art specialist. They did note that graduate students want an Africanist, but the team seemed to maintain the view that the first additional Art History hire should be in Classical Art.

**To: Academic Program Review Team (September  
(Patricia Mathews & Susan Tiano in Art History and E.G. Crichton  
and Buzz Spector in Studio Art History)-- September 20-22, 2010**

**From: David Craven, Chair (during the Review), with help from Kathleen Jesse,  
Associate Chair, and other faculty & staff who submitted responses.**

**Date: March 10, 2011**

**Re: A Response to the External Review**

First we must commend the Review Team on doing so much in so little time. It is worth quoting from your report at the outset, as we believe the team hit most of the main issues quite well:

*In summary, the art history program is among the most respected programs of its kind in the nation, and various Studio Arts areas, especially photography, are among the best ranked programs in U.S. universities. However, for the department to maintain its academic standing, the University must step up with financial support in several areas. Graduate student funds are badly needed to maintain the high quality of students and to enable the department to compete effectively in attracting future students. The latter is now in question due to rumors of poor funding for such students. Faculty need better salaries, along with more adequate funds for conference travel and field and library research. Classrooms and studios need better facilities. Eventually, a new building will be necessary to accommodate both studio and art history needs. A new position in Classical Art is needed to complete the comprehensive art history program already in place.*

## **VII. Closing Thoughts [Academic Program Review Team]**

*In speaking with representatives from all areas of the Department of Art and Art History, the review committee became aware of numerous strengths as well as some specific targets for improvement. One of our most salient impressions is of a highly committed faculty who work incredibly hard and receive high praise from students – despite comparatively low salaries. More so than in many comparable art departments, this faculty maintains rigorous research practices and has garnered significant prestige. This is an invaluable asset that must be protected by increasing, not diminishing, support for faculty in their teaching, research and service activities. With more graduate students than any other department in the college, it is critical as a retention issue that faculty teaching not be increased above a 2/2 load. It is also critical that salaries and research support be augmented wherever possible.*

*The Department of Art and Art History is unique among comparable institutions in uniting the practice and theory of art into one department with a high degree of cooperation. This, along with the strength of individual studio and history areas, contributes to its excellent reputation. In studying all the areas of the department, we perceived an overall need for a stronger vision of cooperation between studio areas. Our tours of the physical plant confirm the department's own assessments that structural repairs are urgent in several areas, that inadequate equipment and furnishings such as*

*projectors and chairs are impeding art history lectures, that graduate student annex buildings are isolated and dangerous, and that new space needs to be opened up for the emergent areas.... In both studio and art history, the present and future cuts in funding for TAs and GAs have created a crisis situation in the morale of both the graduate students and faculty who rely on these TAs and GAs for their support of both faculty teaching and research. It is incumbent upon the administration to find other ways to deal with financial problems than cutting funding for graduate students.*

*It seems that the department's efforts to admit a diverse student body, one that reflects the New Mexico population, has been highly successful. The faculty is less diverse; further effort over time can be made in this direction.*

*The hire of Professors Hickey and Lumpkin, both art critics, adds a significant and innovative breadth to the department and increases its national and international standing in important ways. In their first year, courses they teach are already attracting students and professors from other departments and divisions, a unique dynamic that brings prestige to the entire College of Fine Arts.*

*Here are some specific answers to questions raised in the department Self Study:*

- *It does not seem wise in this economic climate to add new areas to art studio. Increased support to existing areas, as well as formulating sensible links across areas, seems like a better strategy. A more shared approach to resources would help this dynamic.*
- *In art history, a new Classical area hire is critical to filling a notable gap.*
- *It seemed that a new building within the next 10 years is unlikely; therefore we are making no recommendations at this time.*
- *The change of department name to Art, Art History and Visual Culture seems like a good idea given the actual content of the curriculum. This name also more accurately reflects contemporary developments in the discipline.*

*Over all, we left with a strong impression of the strengths of the Department of Art and Art History and its prominence within the College of fine Arts and the university as a whole. This reputation needs to be protected and nurtured by a higher degree of administrative support, especially in the current budget climate. With relatively modest input, the faculty and students could gain the kind of support that will keep the department strong and retain its national and international standing. Internally, we feel that the department has both the desire and talent to continue building innovative programs that increasingly cooperate, collaborate and augment each other.*

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A Summary of the 10 Main Points in the Report needing to be addressed immediately by the Department, College, and University—in order to maintain the reputation and quality of the PhD and MFA programs—which are “among the best ranked programs in US universities”—is as follows:

1. Major new financial support for graduate students in both the MFA and PhD Programs
2. The urgent infrastructural upgrading of current classrooms and studio facilities—leading eventually to a new building
3. Higher salaries for the faculty at all levels
4. A Permanent Fund of Travel Money for Lectures and Research of at least one or two thousand dollars per permanent faculty member—especially when faculty members are invited to speak at other institutions, in other countries
5. Retention of a 2/2 workload for tenured and tenure track faculty in the graduate programs of the PhD and MFA
6. New equipment in every studio area, plus new machines for state-of-the-art power point projection in the art history classrooms, like 2018
7. More diversity among the faculty—especially in Studio Areas
8. Expanded spaces for new areas like Electronic Arts
9. A national search for a new Dean in the College of Fine Arts beginning in the Fall of 2011 (page 5)
10. Retention of the vacant lines in Photography, Painting & Drawing, and Sculpture

A much-needed realization of the Academic Programs Report is that in the future we must have twice as many external reviewers (or at least 6), since we are extremely unusual in having two terminal degrees—a PhD in Art History and an MFA in Studio—in the same department. As such, we need 3 or 4 reviewers for the BA/MA/PhD in Art History and 3 or 4 reviewers for the BFA/MFA in Studio Art. In September 2011 we did what we have always done in the past—namely, we treated the Area of Art History as one of 8 Areas in the Department—*when we should have treated Art History and Studio as 2 entirely different degree tracks*. The External Reviewers were quite frustrated at first (see page 1-2) with what they felt was too little time given to examining the Art History Area adequately. We made adjustments to accommodate their wishes and largely solved the problem this time, *but* the review must be handled differently in the future. The constructive criticism of the Reviewers is clearly correct. As for the most recent rankings of our department, they confirm what was stated in this report and corroborate the claims about our department deserving much greater financial support than it has received to date.

In the fall of 2011, the PhD in Art History was ranked #47<sup>th</sup> in the country by the *National Research Council* and the MFA in Studio Art has just been ranked #50<sup>th</sup> (including 5<sup>th</sup> in Photography and 11<sup>th</sup> in Printmaking) by the most issue of the *US News & World Report*. In the latter case, it is important to note that the Area of Printmaking was unranked as late as two years ago and it is now #11, so major progress has already been made in the last couple of years. We are also confident that the Area of Ceramics, along with other Studio Areas, will soon gain national rankings that it has never enjoyed before.