Throughout the Fall Semester there has been a number of significant changes to the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program. In particular, we said goodbye to two long-standing faculty members who retired over the summer: Otis Tamasauskas and Ted Rettig.

In this newsletter we profile each, introduce new faculty and staff, as well as cover a number of exciting activities that have been happening within and outside Ontario Hall.

**Otis Tamasauskas**

Internationally acclaimed as one of Canada's most innovative printmakers, Otis Tamasauskas continues to challenge the conventions of the printmaking process. Otis was born in Terschenreuth Germany in a displaced persons camp in 1947, following his parents’ flight from Lithuania after the Russian communist occupation. A Master Printer and former Director of Etching at Open Studio in Toronto, Otis has taught printmaking at McMaster University in Hamilton (1978 to 1980), Scarborough College, University of Toronto (1978 to 1983), and Queen's University in Kingston (1980 to 2017).

Juxtaposing the arcane with the everyday, his work resembles that of a bricoleur. His virtuosity in a number of print techniques, such as engraving, lithography, intaglio and woodcut distinguishes his approach. To talk to Otis was to be inspired by the possibilities of print: to be aware of the past, present and future of printmaking. His legacy at Queen's is enormous, from the presses and equipment he donated to the work he produced with visiting artists. Alejandro Arauz, who is a new Lecturer at Queen's in the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program describes Otis as "a true avant-garde printmaker." Arauz continues: “Otis’s works reflect his life; they are rooted with layers of subtle and stimulating colours, evident technical prowess, specific histories, tradition and purposeful experimentation. ‘Think it, Ink it’ and ‘Magic happens on the press’ are but a few of the lasting axioms from the one and only Otis Tamasauskas.”
Ted Rettig

Ted Rettig was born in West Germany in 1949 and has lived in Canada since 1953. A sculptor of precision, placement and great sensitivity, Rettig had an amiable presence at Queen’s University. Rettig, like Tamasauskas, embraced material experimentation and a philosophical approach to the artistic process, and his generous attitude strengthened the students who studied with him. In a review of one of Rettig’s exhibitions for The Globe and Mail in 2009, critic Gary Michael Dault wrote: “The work is also so shockingly open - at least its guilelessness seems shocking now, in these days of manipulative, hard-sell, winking and rib-nudging knowingness - that it feels continually disarming.”

For over forty years, Rettig’s artistic practice has included finely carved stones, three dimensional assemblages of found objects, drawing, photographs, text and installations. He is also well known for his book works, intimate drawings on paper and clay as well as finely crafted original prints of great subtlety. In 2017, he exhibited his first video. Rettig studied at York University (B.A Honours Visual Arts ’74; M.F.A. Visual Arts ’77), at NSCAD (1974-75) and at University of Toronto (B.Ed., O.T.C. ’87). He has taught at numerous schools, including the University of Toronto, Memorial University, York University and at Queen’s University for the last two decades (1997-2017). In the immediate years preceding his retirement, Rettig donated a stunning collection of rare and valuable artists’ books to the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, one of many examples of his cultivation and support of community.

Ink and paper have always had an enigmatic quality for me. There’s something about the power of ink—Take a pound of paint, it will spread five square yards; take a pound of ink, it will spread forty acres.
- Otis Tamasauskas

New Faculty

The Fine Art (Visual Art) Program is excited to have two new faculty members in 2017-2018: Alejandro Arauz and Kevin Rodgers. Alejandro Arauz is interdisciplinary artist exploring issues of identity, diaspora and transplantation through the vernacular of print media, performance and video. He is particularly interested in the Latin American Diaspora within Canada and the USA. Alejandro earned his Honors BFA from the University of Windsor in Canada and an MFA degree from Louisiana State University.

Since arriving at Queen’s University, Alejandro Arauz has helped create a new Digital Print Media Lab, overseen the archiving of hundreds of prints collected by Carl Heywood and Otis Tamasauskas, as well as organized a student print sale and Print Pulse 30, a travelling student exhibition. His excitement and energy is palpable, and his presence in the print studios is a testament to a restless creativity Tamasauskas sought.

Kevin Rodgers is the new Undergraduate Chair of the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program. His varied artistic practice examines the tensions between withdrawal (physical, spiritual, political, aesthetic) and action. In addition to exhibiting his work widely in both solo and group exhibitions, he has collaborated with diverse artists such as Marilou Lemmens and Richard Ibghy, Robin Collyer, Cynthia Girard and Derek
The Koerner Artist in Residence Program is an annual professional residency in the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program at Queen’s University. The residency program provides students with unique access to mentorship from a celebrated artist, and gives the artist a chance to share their expertise. The residency is made possible by the generous support of the Koerner Foundation.

The 2018 Koerner Visiting Artist will be Winnipeg-based Karel Funk, and his residency will take place from March 4th to 17th. Funk received a BFA from the University of Manitoba in 1997 and an MFA from Columbia University in New York in 2003. Over the last decade he has investigated the possibilities of figurative portraits that find a bridge between historical signifiers, the dominant being renaissance portraiture, and contemporary urbanism. Using acrylic paint Funk builds his portraits through a glazing technique, often taking months to complete one painting. Funk has had three solo shows at 303 Gallery in New York, two museum shows and participated in several group shows in North America and abroad. In 2016 Funk was the subject of a museum retrospective held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. His work is in the collections of institutions such as the Guggenheim, Whitney Museum and the National Gallery of Canada, as well as many private collections.

Sullivan, as well as has curated three exhibitions: With You and Others (2016), THE FOX (2011) and IF DESTROYED... (2010). His writings have appeared in numerous publications, including FUSE, C Magazine, Border Crossings, Artpapers, Millions and Prism of Reality. In 2014 and 2015, Rodgers completed residencies in Belgium and in 2016 participated in a two-month residency at the Nida Art Colony (Lithuania).

The expansive nature of his practice, combined with a rigorous approach to making complements the intensive studio focus that is the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program.

Visiting Artists
Koerner Visiting Artist

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Marigold Santos and Mathieu Léger

In Fall 2018, the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program welcomed two visiting artists: Marigold Santos (Montreal) and Mathieu Léger (Moncton). The BFA students were treated to lively discussions about the practices of these two unique artists, participated in one-on-one studio visits and had the chance to share conversations with the artists in more informal settings.

The visiting artists bring a wealth of knowledge about the life of a practicing artist, often providing especially useful information on the years immediately following an undergraduate degree. Students get a chance to hear about the challenges faced, as well as the determination and resiliency that accompany a successful artistic practice.

Jess Peterson: Being awarded the prize means so much. When I was in second year I can remember Lindsey Wilson (BFA, 2015) winning the award when she graduated. Everyone in the program was so excited that a Queen’s student had won. After that I sometimes thought about how amazing it would be to win. I can’t believe it actually happened! When I first got the news I was in the car with my parents. It was nice to share the first celebration with them as they were so supportive of me pursuing a Fine Art degree.

KR: Can you describe the piece that you submitted for the prize? I remember seeing your final installation and it was an impressive painting that seemed to occupy the entire room.

JP: The piece I submitted was the first two panels of a nine panel piece. The panels depict two figures covered in a strange pink lumpy texture. I felt the first two panels were the strongest and could stand on their own. (Also, there was a 8 by 8 foot limit so I couldn’t enter the entire piece which in total was 8 by 36 feet).

KR: How has the BFA program itself informed your way of thinking about painting and your own artwork?

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JP: Ontario Hall was the most wonderful space to create work in. I miss my studio! Having my own designated space allowed me to work on a huge scale and access the work at any time. I was perhaps overly excited by the ability to work large and ended up building such large panels that I needed help carrying them to my studio. There was always a friend nearby though who was willing to stop their own work and help me carry huge boards up three narrow flights of stairs. My peers and I spent so much time in Ontario Hall that we all graduated as close friends. The network of other young artists that I now have is the best thing the program gave me.

KR: Where does your desire to make work come from? What is it about painting that makes you want to return to it again and again?

JP: I like painting because you can keep returning to a painting over many months and keep adding to it, and taking away. It is like that cliched assignment where students have to draw an apple 100 times. When you are working on a painting over a long period of time, you get to know your subject so well and you discover through trial and error the best way to capture the subject. When drawing the apple you end with a collection of 100 different pieces. With painting you end with a single work that is full of history, time, and effort. A painting that has been worked on for months has such a wonderful and inimitable quality to it.

KR: What are your plans for the next year?

I am currently working to save money for grad school. Though I am not sure what country yet, my hope is to study in Europe as I have never been there. Before I start seriously applying for a masters program, I want to have a few years out of school painting on my own. The independent aspect of fourth year at Queen’s was so exciting for me. My art benefited from the freedom of no assignments or deadlines. After a year of experimenting, my paintings started to turn in a direction that I feel I can spend a few years pursuing. Now the main challenge is getting into a habit of painting after work when all I want to do is sit on the couch. But I’m determined!
In November, a number of BFA students undertook two separate group trips. From November 2 to 5, Professors Kathleen Sellars and Rebecca Anweiler led our annual trip to New York City. As second year BFA student Julie Fast-Grass described, “We got the chance to visit so many galleries and museums. The variety of art was inspiring and helpful for my own practice. We had the freedom to explore the city as we liked which allowed for other activities! I went to see Jimmy Fallon, a Broadway show and spent plenty of time enjoying art and book stores in Soho. It was a great opportunity to learn, explore and hangout with my friends!”

Two weeks later, Alejandro Arauz took his third-year Print students and others to Toronto. By visiting the Marvin Gelber Print and Drawing Study Centre at the Art Gallery of Toronto, students had a chance to closely connect with prints by acclaimed artists like Joyce Weiland, Alex Colville and Jasper Johns. The Marvin Gelber Print and Drawing Study Centre allows visitors to request and view prints, drawings and photographs from the collection. Furthermore, students get a behind the scenes view of the storage, library and archival practices pertaining to works on paper. Following the Marvin Gelber Print and Drawing Study Centre, the students went to the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at the University of Toronto, where they got to see the work of the BMO 1st Art! Invitational Student Art Competition, including Ontario winner and Queen’s BFA graduate Jess Peterson’s winning painting Overripe. In addition, students viewed the exhibition of the final five nominees for the Sobey Art Award, a prestigious award that provides visibility and support to young Canadian contemporary artists.
Print Pulse 30
Student Exhibition

Print Pulse 30 is a traveling student exhibition involving four venues: Queen’s University, Syracuse University, McMaster University and Nipissing University. Since the exhibition involves students from each of the participating print programs, students can begin to contextualize both their practice and their programs. Similarities and distinctions emerge, both at the individual and collective levels. The exhibition highlights specific print media studio aspects, like sharing space, processes and equipment, while upholding traditions and incorporating innovations.

New Staff

In August 2017, our Administrative Assistant Noreen Haun moved onto another position within Queen’s University. Her welcoming presence, ever gracious smile and extraordinary ability to multi-task will surely be missed. Thank you Noreen for all you did! Admirably taking over the role of Administrative Assistant is Levanna Schönwandt. Since joining us, Levanna has helped the Program in innumerable ways during this period of transition. Welcome Levanna!

Contact

More information on the activities of the Fine Art (Visual Art) Program, as well as archived newsletters can be found on our home website www.queensu.ca/bfa

FINE ART (VISUAL ART) PROGRAM
Ontario Hall,
67 University Avenue
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario. K7L 3N6

Levanna Schönwandt
(Administrative Assistant)
Email: fineart@queensu.ca
Phone: 613-533-6166

Images provided by Kevin Rodgers, Alejandro Arauz and Ramolen Laruan