

Academy Receives Regional Accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission

Culminating a journey that began four years ago, the American Academy of Art has been awarded full accreditation by the prestigious Higher Learning Commission (HLC). This institutional accreditation publicly affirms the Academy's reputation for high-quality academic programs.

The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools accredits colleges and universities in nineteen states and ensures that institutions meet extensive performance criteria.

The accreditation process began with a self-study by the school, which first received initial candidacy in 2007. The process continued and was followed by a comprehensive evaluation visit at the Academy in February 2008. On May 28, 2008, the review committee of the Higher Learning Commission agreed with the evaluation team's recommendation that the Academy met its eligibility requirements and criteria for full accreditation. The Academy is also accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology.

Richard H. Otto, President of the Academy, said, "This is truly a special achievement in our rich 85-year history. The Higher Learning Commission process offers many benefits to an



From left to right, Jaime O'Connor (Chair of Humanities and Sciences), Joel Pace (Department Chair), Duncan Webb (Academic Dean), Richard H. Otto (President), Dr. Patricia Widmayer (Board Member), Dr. Lee Bash (HLC Team Chairman)

institution, particularly in the areas of assessment of student learning and effective teaching, in addition to strategic planning for the future. We are a better institution as a result of the accreditation process. I am also very proud of how our dedicated faculty and staff worked together to earn this honor."

Accreditation by the HLC provides many benefits for Academy students. The assessment process acts as a quality assurance step to ensure that classes being taught have a high

level of academic quality. It helps assure prospective students that the Academy is an institution that not only has public respect as a reputable art school but is also recognized as an academic institution for its quality of education and academic integrity.

The assessment measures of student learning and effective teaching processes also acts as a catalyst for teachers to reevaluate, improve, and if necessary, change elements in the curriculum for currency and relevance.



Academy Honors Famous Alumnus Sandy Dvore



Lone Fitzgerald (Vice President) with Sandy Dvore at the Academy's Graduation

Hollywood Artist *Sandy Dvore*

Sandy Dvore was honored this year at the American Academy of Art's graduation with the Academy's Alumni Achievement Award.

While a student at the American Academy of Art in the 1950s, Sandy Dvore loved to explore the city, its

nightlife, and its art scene, to absorb it all in and use it in his work. Thirty years later, Dvore would go on to win an Emmy and create a new advertising art form, transform television title design, and be responsible for many of the television title designs that are highly recognizable today.



Partridge Family Logo Design

Before making it to Hollywood, Dvore needed to hone the fundamentals of his craft. After leaving the University of Illinois, Dvore found the ideal academic

and artistic environment at the American Academy of Art.

While studying at the Academy, Dvore's experiences in Chicago greatly influenced him. Dvore remembers, "I wanted to be in the city because I wanted to be in the action." At the Academy Dvore had several jobs apprenticing in creative positions, eventually ending up at Leo Burnett as a creative assistant, but he had greater ambitions.

He headed to Hollywood to try his hand at acting. While an actor in the theater, Dvore began painting set design backdrops. As Dvore explains, "eventually somebody spotted me, gave me a chance to do something, and then I was noticed by a publicity agent." That agent was Freddie Fields, who introduced Dvore to the celebrities who would soon become his clients.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Dvore created celebrity images for such major stars as Frank Sinatra, Vic Damone, and Judy



Frank Sinatra Illustration



Graduates Prepared for Path To Success



Academy Graduating Class

Garland for their appearances in Las Vegas. Many of his celebrity illustrations are a part of Hollywood and Americana.

Dvore began producing title designs for television programs. As Dvore explains, “there weren’t [remote controls] so people would watch the entire [television] show.” Therefore producing memorable title designs became an integral part of the television program. And no one produced more memorable title designs than Sandy Dvore.

The title design for *The Partridge Family*, one mother partridge followed by five little partridges, has become almost more famous than the show itself. But that is only one example of a multitude of Dvore’s iconic images, which include the title designs for *Knot’s Landing*, *North & South*, and

Spenser for Hire. In 1987, Dvore’s work was acknowledged and honored by the Primetime Emmy Awards. He won the Emmy for Outstanding Graphic and Title Design for his work on the show *Carol, Carl, Whoopi and Robin*.

Dvore’s work was not limited to television and celebrity images. He also produced movie posters, helping to spearhead an art form upon which the movie industry now relies, the poster trade campaign. Once again, the images that Dvore produced would become some of the most famous in motion picture history—these include the posters for *The Great Escape*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Lean on Me*, and *Drugstore Cowboy*.

Because of Dvore’s experience and success, he has much to teach those

entering the industry. Although reticent to offer advice to artists starting out in the industry, one recommendation he makes is to always show confidence when dealing with clients.

Most of Dvore’s iconic images can be found on his website www.electronicgallery.com.



Erika Cabrera and Lucerito Macias



Thomas Blackshear

Internationally Acclaimed Illustrator



A Man with Passion

Thomas Blackshear

Internationally acclaimed illustrator and 1977 Academy graduate Thomas Blackshear inspired Academy students with his recent Visiting Artist Lecture as he spoke about his path from an illustration student to a popular contemporary collectible artist. Blackshear advised the students not to define themselves too narrowly as artists, but to remain open to

pursuing new directions in their work. As an Academy student Blackshear was focused on a single career path: illustration. But the award-winning illustrator ultimately found creative fulfillment and became a household name when he took his art in a whole new direction, to collectibles. Reflecting on

Ebony Visions, his line of collectibles designed for an African-American audience, quickly became the top-selling black figurines in the country. But Blackshear is not content to rest on his laurels. Instead, he continues to pursue other artistic avenues that allow him to grow as an artist. Blackshear



Thomas Blackshear Speaking to Academy Students



King Kong Poster

his career, he said, “There will always be a new area that you can apply your craft in that isn’t the mainstream that could really pay off for you in the long run.”

Hallmark Cards recruited Blackshear while he was still a student at the Academy. He went on to work as a head illustrator for the Godbold/Richter Studio and then to a successful freelance career that included illustrations for U.S. postage stamps. After more than a decade as an illustrator, however, Blackshear found himself seeking more freedom to experiment. A freelance commission from the Hamilton Collection opened the doors to a new and rewarding career as a collectible artist.

encouraged the students to develop both their craft and their business skills.

“Your talent is a gift that can open doors for you if you’ve nurtured it to a point that people find they really want it,” he said, “All you have to do is market it the right way.”

Mr. Blackshear has illustrated 27 U.S. postage decorative stamps, including Gone with the Wind, Wizard of Oz, Black Heritage and Super Bowl XXVIII Commemorative Poster. His work includes collector plates for Star Wars and Star Trek and his clients include Disney, Universal Studios, National Geographic and many other prominent organizations.

Wizard World



Carla Wyzgala

In addition to the lineup of comic book vendors, celebrity appearances and gaming tournaments, comics and science fiction enthusiasts who attended this year's Wizard World Convention also had the opportunity to view the work of several American Academy of Art students.

The Wizard World Convention, held June 26-28, 2008 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, was organized by Wizard Entertainment, a leader in the comic industry that turns out several magazines, comics, toys, trading cards and a series of nationwide conventions.

In addition to a commercial opportunity for comic vendors, Wizard World is a place for the comic community and artists to meet and exchange ideas. At the convention, artists can gain considerable experience, make connections and

even find employment opportunities. Wizard World also provides a great place for artists to meet other working artists and show their work in a professional setting. In Artist Alley, artists can exhibit their work to both fans and other artists, and they can network with and even sell to fans. American Academy of Art students who showed work in Artist Alley included Steve Palenica and Anthony Kosar. According to Palenica, the convention allowed him to make connections with both potential clients and other artists.



Steve Palenica

While at the convention, Palenica warns artists against taking on the role of the fan rather than that of the professional artist. Palenica advises artists to “be mentally ready... go in as a working professional. You are on equal footing. The moment you become a fan, you lose credibility.”

Instead, he suggests that artists practice professional skills: “The way that I approach things is not as a fan. You have to be fearless, you can't be intimidated.” In order to demonstrate professionalism, you should, above all else, talk to other artists—no matter how famous—as peers.

At the convention, Palenica noticed that those who actively engaged others were the people who were most successful: “People want that level of personality; they want to know that you are taking the time in them.”

Artists who are interested in taking part in Artist Alley at Wizard World should understand the commitment necessary, both in terms of financial responsibility and time management. The total financial commitment runs upward of \$1500, including money for the table, cards, flyers, and prints. Palenica sees this as a financial investment: “If you take your work seriously, others will take you seriously.”

The Wizard World convention provides a remarkable opportunity for artists to see what other artists are producing, to take part in an artistic community, and to hone their professional skills. In this world of wizards and fanboys, superheroes and villains, artists can display their work and perhaps develop a rabid following of their own.



Academy Employer's Night



Employer's Night: Students Meeting with Prospective Employers

The American Academy of Art's third annual Employer's Night brought together the school's newest graduates with potential employers from the art and design field. The event allowed the students to gain valuable networking and interviewing experience in the familiar environment of the college's Bill Parks Art Gallery. Approximately twenty students from the Bachelor of Fine Arts program in Design, Illustration, and 3-D Modeling and Animation participated in the evening's activities.

The Employer's Night event is part of the Career Services Office's ongoing program to develop relationships with employers and bring industry onto campus. The event took place in conjunction with the Annual Bachelor of Fine Arts Exhibition.

Graduates appreciated the opportunity to interact with potential employers and participate in the interview process. The event proved valuable as it allowed the graduates to speak directly with employers about their

job requirements and discuss trends in the industry. Rather than finding an opening at a specific company, most of the graduates expressed interest in refining their interviewing skills in a familiar and comfortable environment. Many, like Illustration grad Katie Blackburn, were "just interested in the experience of talking to employers."

A broad spectrum of companies ranging from large corporations to specialized marketing firms participated. For example, representatives from CNA and Arc Worldwide introduced themselves to the graduates and discussed their company and hiring requirements. The Career Services office paired graduates with the most suitable industry representatives based on their portfolios. The event generated much discussion about industry trends and job openings.

Along with the career opportunities offered by Employer's Night, graduates also had the opportunity to practice professional demeanor and proper interview dress and techniques

and had the experience of networking with professionals in the art world.

The graduates who took part in Employer's Night found the event to be a valuable experience. Sebastian Ortiz, 3-D Modeling and Animation graduate, stated, "The employers asked me about my art and told me about their companies... It was a great way to just meet people and show my work." Michael Wlos, a graduate pursuing a career in advertising, concurred, finding the experience a valuable chance to network with people in the field.



Student with Prospective Employer

Academy Artists Contribute to Halo 3



Mastering the Chief

Lorraine and Robert McLees

The release of Halo 3 marked the highest-grossing opening in entertainment history, with more than 1 million gamers playing on Xbox Live within twenty-four hours. It quickly became the best-selling video game of 2007. The team that created this cultural phenomenon included two American Academy of Art alumni, Robert and Lorraine McLees.

Robert McLees joined Bungie, the company that produced Halo, in 1995, just two years after graduating from the Academy. His foundation in traditional media proved essential to his success in the field, even though he was working almost exclusively in digital media. Over the past 13 years, Robert has created some of the key elements in the Halo universe, including weapons and creatures. These days, his role involves more writing and editing than drawing, “though I do still find time for that whenever possible,” he adds.

Robert is open about the fact that he broke into the highly competitive field of video game design by being “pushy.”

“I was definitely not the guy who was gonna take no for an answer,” he says. He advises Academy students to take the same kind of initiative in finding their own careers. Although help from others is available, “landing that job is still going to reside fully on your own shoulders.”

Although Lorraine McLees had an interest in video games, she didn’t intend to work in that industry. She studied graphic design and illustration at the Academy while working as a graphics director for a Chicago newspaper. But in 1998, Lorraine received a phone call from Robert McLees, a former classmate, about a job opening at Bungie for a concept artist.

Lorraine, a 1990 Academy graduate, had not been in contact with Robert for eight years, but Robert remembered a piece of art Lorraine created while in school that prompted him to call her. This piece of art essentially is responsible for her current position.

Her first freelance project for Bungie quickly turned into a full-time position as Art Director of Marketing, just prior to the announcement of the first Halo project. Lorraine’s first responsibility for Halo was working with agency artists to

create the logo. She is still proud of the result. “The Halo logo as it is right now still retains the original form of what I helped create, although the rendering effects change as time goes by.” The work on Halo 3 was much more collaborative than on the previous games. Lorraine’s team helps Microsoft to define marketing direction, and then provides key visual components for marketing collateral or concepts that an agency can take to finish. The team works on commercials, alternate reality games, point of purchase displays, packaging, and advertising.

One of the concepts that Lorraine presented for Halo 3 was chosen as the key piece for promotions and box cover. Her other responsibilities, which continue after the release of the game, include maintaining visual continuity for licensing partners, such as comics and action figures, and providing assets for media support, such as covers and screenshots. Lorraine emphasizes the importance of goal setting and research in her career. She encourages Academy students to think about every project as an opportunity to do his or her best: “The more practice you get, the better you get! And if there is an opportunity to do something more, grab it!”





True Hollywood Story *J. Anthony Kosar*

Not every aspiring special-effects artist gets an internship at Stan Winston Studio in Los Angeles. In fact, in Summer 2007, only two did. One came from Germany, and the other was J. Anthony Kosar, Illustration major from the American Academy of Art.

For over thirty years, Stan Winston Studio has been creating some of the most memorable creatures in movies. Their credits include such blockbusters as *Jurassic Park*, *Alien*, *The Terminator*, and *Edward Scissorhands*. They maintain the highest artistic standards and select teams of professional artists to work collaboratively on each production.

Kosar grew up fascinated by films made by Stan Winston Studio and motivated by his own enthusiasm for Halloween. In eighth grade, he created his first zombie mask, a trial-and-error process that took him three and a half months.

That kind of dedication and persistence is still evident in Kosar's work today. He was recently recognized by the Annual Collegiate Artists Competition with an honorable mention and won the Illustration award and the Peter Berry Award at the Academy's 2007 juried student show.

The opportunity for his internship came through contacts made by Kosar's sister, who is currently pursuing her own career in film

making. On a trip to California with Kosar's mother, she took Kosar's portfolio along and showed his work to a sound designer. This led to an appointment to show his work to Stan Winston Studio. Kosar was speechless when he was offered the internship.

Kosar says the two and a half months spent interning at the studio was an incredible learning experience. If this wasn't enough, he had the opportunity to meet and talk with many of the industry "greats," including Jordu Schell and Joe Gomez. He gained invaluable advice and insights into the special effects industry through these new contacts.

Some of the projects Kosar worked on during his internship are coming soon to a theater (or television) near you. He worked with a team on the new Indiana Jones film (*Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*). The team had to create five duplicates of the same skeleton for a single character in the film. He was also part of a team that created more than 850 action figures and life-sized guns for two of the popular Halo 3 "Believe" commercials.



Display Room at Stan Winston Studios

Kosar's advice to other aspiring artists is simple: "Never sleep. Keep working. Be your own best critic, and always keep growing." Some may think of it as fate, but to Anthony Kosar his future is determined by hard work and dedication. Look out, Hollywood!



J. Anthony Kosar with Hollywood Great Stan Winston

ooting Stars



MAD Magazine Artist

Jason Seiler

“Welcome to the usual gang of idiots.” Some would take that greeting as an insult, but to Jason Seiler those words signaled the realization of a childhood dream. Since the age of eleven, Seiler had dreamed of drawing for *MAD Magazine*. This passion for *MAD* inspired him to study art and illustration. The official acceptance to “The Usual Gang of Idiots,” as *MAD* artists are known, was just the beginning of one of the most challenging projects of Seiler’s career.

Since studying illustration at the Academy, Seiler has gone on to a successful career as a freelance illustrator, completing projects for many national magazines, including *Time*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Golf Magazine*. This past year, he was invited to exhibit one of his works in the Society of Illustrators show; his work, *Thom Yorke*, was also one of 40 paintings chosen from the show by the Society to go on national tour. He has also become an author with the publication of his book, *Caricature: The Art of Jason Seiler*.

With such an impressive resume, why would doing one illustration for *MAD Magazine* be such a significant accomplishment? Seiler has been submitting his work to *MAD* for over 12 years but was told it was just too “polished” for the magazine—except maybe for a cover. But rather than give up on his dream, Seiler insisted that he would do any assignment, no matter how small. His persistence and optimism finally paid off when he got the call for a two-page spread. “No one’s first assignment from *MAD* is a two-page spread,” said a beaming Seiler.

The piece depicts seven well-known comedians: Ellen DeGeneres, Lewis Black, Jay Leno, Larry the Cable Guy, Carlos Mencia, Dane Cook and Bill

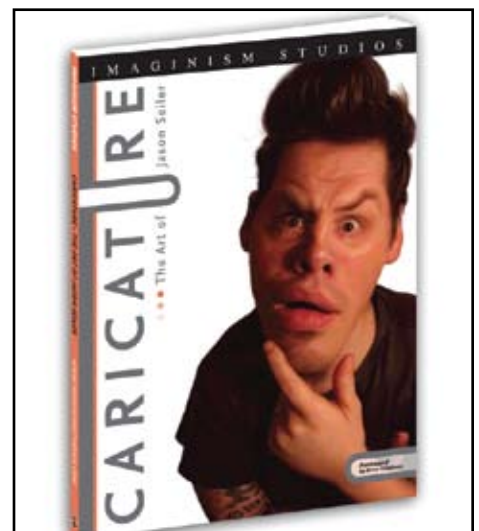
Maher. Seiler had to break from his usual “nice” style to capture the characters in the style they were looking for. “Draw them as if you hate these people,” was the directive from *MAD*.

Seiler says that the *MAD* assignment really pushed his perfectionist tendencies. From the initial sketches, *MAD* insisted on perfecting

every detail of the spread. Once the sketch was finally approved, it took an additional two weeks to digitally paint the final piece. And as if the detailed composition wasn’t enough, *MAD* also wanted a brick-wall background with a spotlight behind the figures. The final piece is an appropriate testament to Seiler’s own commitment to quality, with such details as beads of sweat and moles used to great effect. This disciplined work ethic is characteristic of Seiler’s commitment to all of his work as an illustrator.

His commitment to illustration is evident in a disciplined work ethic, one that sees him in the studio Monday through Friday, from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. He tries to squeeze in time to do some sketches and painting for his own pleasure, but for Seiler it’s all about the job. “If it’s not 100%, I just can’t send it,” Seiler says. He believes that every published illustration affects his professional reputation—for better or worse.

To current Academy students in illustration, Seiler recommends a similar commitment: “Take classes really seriously. Don’t bring your video games to school. Put everything you’ve got into it. Think of every class and every assignment as a job. Tell yourself it’s a high-paying assignment for a magazine.”



Jason Seiler’s Book
Caricature: The Art of Jason Seiler



Oil Painting Portrait Club

Academy Faculty, Student Honored by Watercolor Societies



Tom Herzberg, Chair of Fine Art

The American Academy of Art made a strong showing at the recent Illinois Watercolor Society (IWS) 24th Annual Open Exhibition. Representatives from both the faculty and the student body were included in the exhibition held at the Brickton Art Center and Gallery in Park Ridge, Illinois. Faculty member and Fine Art Department Chair Tom Herzberg received an honorable mention award for his painting “Pirate.” Illustration graduate and 2008 class valedictorian J. Anthony Kosar was awarded Best of Show for his painting “Never Known, Never Forgotten.” Kosar’s prize included a Jack Richeson and Company painting workshop certificate and a cash prize of \$1000.

Additionally, Herzberg was recognized by the American Watercolor Society (AWS), which accepted his painting into the society’s annual exhibition. The AWS began in 1866 to promote the art of watercolor painting in America. Artists who are selected to exhibit in two annual exhibitions become members of the society. Membership in the society is considered very prestigious: those artists selected as members earn the right to put “AWS” after their names, a great honor in the art world.

Professional organizations such as the IWS and AWS provide both novice and veteran artists opportunities by sponsoring exhibitions and competitions. The recent success at these exhibitions continues a long association for the Academy with the IWS and the tradition of watercolor painting. Tom Francesconi, IWS member and judge, is an Academy alumnus, and Irving Shapiro, AWS, who is considered an influential instructor and proponent of the medium, was associated with the Academy for almost fifty years as a faculty member and director. The Academy is one of a few institutions that offers a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Painting with a specialization in Watercolor.



Academy students from all areas of study have an additional avenue for developing their portrait-painting skills outside of the classroom, thanks to a new co-curricular activity, the Oil Painting Portrait Club. Organized by instructor Don Yang, the club offers students the opportunity to practice painting from life and the freedom to experiment with their work outside the classroom setting. Members also take turns posing for the group, allowing them to experience portrait painting from the model’s point of view.

The club, which meets on Wednesday evenings, usually draws 20-25 students that consist mostly of fine art and illustration majors. Participants find the club valuable because it acts as open studio time for artists to both practice portrait painting and gain a new understanding of the role of the model.

Along with the extra practice the club provides, students have the

opportunity to set individualized goals for themselves while still working in a collaborative, classroom-like setting. As Yang describes, “In the classroom, they’re usually just doing what they’re told. Here, they get to do what they want. They also learn that they can’t survive alone. It’s a chance for them to work with a group of people and inspire each other.”

Students also enjoy the latitude allowed in the club to produce and experiment. Fine Arts major Vinnie Sartoris states: “It’s fun to be able to experiment. We’re usually following a strict regimen in class, and here we can try different styles outside of what we’re supposed to do in class.”

The time to explore elements of portraiture in the club also can help students become more confident students and more proficient artists. As student Brian Skol explains, “It takes thousands of hours of practice to get good... You can go get a beer anytime.”

Academy Activity



Illustration Class Critiques

Working on a Multimedia Project



Academy's Bill Parks Gallery Exhibit



Sculpting from the Model



Academy's Alumni Art on Display

Albert Wagner Scholarship

The Academy is proud to announce a new scholarship in memory of Albert Wagner, a former member of the Board of Directors and consultant to the Academy for many years. The Academy will award a scholarship in the Spring of 2009 for academic achievement. The honor will be awarded to a currently attending student. Mr. Wagner was very interested in quality education and was instrumental in much of the Academy's success.

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