



Sketches

December 2008

Volume 4 Number 4

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

CraftNet is an international network of community colleges devising innovative ways through partnerships to develop artisan-based strengths into a sustainable growth sector for each of their service areas. Projects at each college integrate various aspects of design, production, technology, marketing, collaboration, and business management skills, and include ways to attract low-income and non-traditional learners. For up-to-date news and information about CraftNet or past issues of *CraftNet Sketches*, please visit the website of **Regional Technology Strategies, Inc.** at <http://www.rtsinc.org/craftnet/index.html> or call 919.933.6699.

CraftNet Member News

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! The national public debut of **CraftNet's online curriculum, "e-Commerce for Artisans,"** and a keynote address by **Ann Markusen** on "Entrepreneurial Artists: The Hidden Dividend for Regional Economies" are just two stellar highlights of this spring's **2009 CODA conference** to be held on April 23-26 in St. Paul Minnesota. CraftNet is a co-sponsor with CODA, also known as the Craft Organization Development Association, for the meeting, which will be hosted by the American Association of Woodturners, whose national headquarters is located in St. Paul.

The national gathering's overall theme is "**Crafting Partnership for Growth: Creating Connections.**" As such, several sessions will provide CraftNet members and other post-secondary schools the opportunity to brainstorm with crafts organizations about possibilities for ongoing collaboration. Stu Rosenfeld will offer a presentation about "Cool Community Colleges: Entrepreneurial Artisans and the Creative Economy," and CraftNet members who worked on the new online e-commerce curriculum will offer an in-depth examination of at least two modules.

Dr. Markusen, who will keynote the opening session on Friday, April 24, is director of the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics at the Humphrey Institute of the University of Minnesota. Her current research focuses on occupational approaches to regional development and on artists and cultural activity as regional economic stimulants. She says that artists and artisans are highly entrepreneurial and represent a hidden arts dividend for the economy.

While in St. Paul, **CraftNet** will hold a members-only (plus invited guests) **business session** on Thursday, April 23. We plan to meet at the campus of **Minneapolis Community and**

Technical College, one of our newest CraftNet members. More details about the business session and CODA meeting will be forthcoming in January.

In early November, **Berea College Student Crafts** took in nearly \$20,000 in revenues during a special 44-hour sale that heralded the launch of the college's **newly designed e-commerce site**: <http://bereacollegecrafts.com>. The site is designed to provide simple, secure and friendly online shopping. In its design, Berea is placing a strong emphasis on customer engagement. The site features video interviews of students from the various studio areas as a means of connecting the buyer to the maker. One-of-a-kind and student prototypes will be available soon. A variety of promotional efforts—e-blasts, a variety of TV and print ads, and a new sales brochure sent to a mailing list current customers—are helping to drive business to the site.

Berea College has maintained an e-commerce website for sale of its student-produced craft items since 1998. According to **Tim Glotzbach**, director of the crafts program at Berea, about 25 percent of Student Craft's total revenues currently come from online sales. In fact, Glotzbach believes this new website will become the primary sales method for the crafts program. A team of design, marketing, and IT students soon will be put in place to continuously study and refine the site. This long-term process, Glotzbach said, will provide an excellent hands-on education in all aspects of e-commerce business and customer development.

CraftNet's newest member college, **Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC)** in **Kalispell, Montana** offers a wide range of credit art classes, including drawing, photography, oil painting, ceramics and sculpting, watercolor, jewelry and metalsmithing, graphic design, videomaking, art history, and printmaking. Classes are located in a new state-of-the-art facility equipped with cutting-edge technologies and natural lighting that provides students opportunities for optimal learning and creative expression.

The building houses the college's graphic arts program as well as a Student Art Gallery that features exhibits showcasing the creations of FVCC students, alumni, and notable area artists. In addition, the college offers non-credit continuing education classes for community members of all ages. This fall the Center



hosted its second Artist-to-Artist public lecture series featuring presentations that included art instructor **John Rawlings**, artist **Dawn Duane Evans**, and artist and quilter **Brian Dykhuizen**.



Art exhibits at FVCC this fall also included an **art photography show** highlighting the people and culture of Nepal, taken by students enrolled in the college's first **Nepal Immersion** cultural immersion study program. The semester's concluding exhibit, entitled "**The 5-Headed Artist: A Collaboration**," featured collective works from four Flathead Valley artists—**Deb Stika, Mikie di Muro, Linda Katsuda** and **Sally Askevold**. The fifth head represented all four artists grouped together.

FVCC graphic arts student Claire Nelson submitted the winning design in the **2008 Northwest Montana Fair** art contest.

The design was featured on ticket buyer brochures, area billboards, posters, book covers, and promotional fair materials. It further earned her an invitation to a national competition.

Nelson's success inspired her to start her own freelance business, "Claire Elizabeth Nelson," and she already has secured numerous local clients including fair concert sponsor Kalispell Toyota.



Ceramics Instructor David Scott Smith joined the FVCC faculty this fall, bringing a wealth of prior experience as a ceramics and design instructor at Southeastern Louisiana University, Baton Rouge Community College, University of Louisiana, and North Star Ceramic Center in Spokane. Smith also is a former owner of **Foolish Fish Studio**, which specializes in custom tile designs, lamps, fountains, furniture, and decorative art.

Three Piedmont Technical College (PTC) students in the Professional Clay Program at the Center for Creative Economies **recently won awards** during the Annual Greenwood Artist Guild show at the Greenwood Museum. In the three-dimensional category, Bob Taft received first place, Martha Peddicord second place, and Bob Taylor third place.

On December 10, **PTC pottery students hosted their third Annual Clayworks Christmas Show and Sale** at the college conference center in Greenwood. Pieces for sale included cups, mugs, bowls, baking and serving dishes, and porcelain Christmas ornaments, as well as an array of decorative pieces. This was the third Christmas show students have held since the Professional Clay program launched in 2006. It allows students the opportunity to gain the skills needed to produce pottery as well as those required to operate a self-sustaining business. "The pieces [featured at the show] are both affordable and of great value, whether for gifts or personal use," said **Gary Clontz**, instructor and coordinator for the program. "Our visitors discovered an array of colors and textures making these pieces both useful and memorable." Students used their marketing skills to design posters to publicize the sale, and these kinds of events also provide students an opportunity to gauge what sort of market exists for particular types of pieces. A portion of each sale from the show will be allocated to support the PTC pottery program through the College Foundation.

In late August, **Minneapolis Community & Technical College's Continuing Education** department wrapped up its third summer of involvement with a youth program called **The SPEAK Project**.

The program engages urban youth in a constructive dialogue with their communities and offers them a positive outlet for expression through spoken word, digital photography, and the **creation of public metal art pieces dedicated to their neighborhoods**. Developed by the Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center, the project pairs youth from a wide variety of backgrounds with professional artists and teaches teamwork and technical skills while introducing participants to new art forms.

MCTC provides classes in basic metal fabrication techniques to create sculptural pieces that then are installed in Minneapolis neighborhoods. This year SPEAK participants focused on the theme of "Growth in the Community," designing and building an artistic bench that was placed in Cottage Park in the Jordan neighborhood of North Minneapolis. The project was funded by a generous grant from the Pohlad Family Foundation, with the Peace Foundation and Juxtaposition Arts providing programming support. MCTC unveiled the bench at a dedication celebration on August 23 that also featured a spoken word performance and digital photography exhibition.



International News

In October 2008, *CraftNet SKETCHES* co-editor **Stuart Rosenfeld** visited the several **craft villages** while on holiday in **Thailand and Vietnam**. Upon his return, Stu filed this report:

Even as **Vietnam's** economy industrializes, much of the economy still depends on its arts, culture, and tourism. In Hanoi, the Temple of Literature, the Museum of Vietnamese Women, and the Ho Chi Minh Museum are very popular centers of art and culture. Most of the crafts sold in the cities are produced in rural craft villages, like Bat Trang and Van Phuc.

Bat Trang, a village of 3,000 located just south of Hanoi along the Red River, is a leading source of traditional **ceramic dinnerware** and **decorative objects**. About 70 percent of the village's economy is based on ceramics, with about half of the production exported to its former occupiers, France, China, and Spain. Although a few artisans produce ceramic sculptures, most of the pottery is cast from molds and then carefully finished and hand-painted by employees.



Ceramics finishers in Bat Trang, Vietnam

The craft dates back to the 11th century, when scholars brought pottery skills back from China, and local residents discovered an abundant supply of white clay. Initially, craftspeople made tiles for temple roofs but in the 15th century, local tile makers learned to make a cracked glaze and expanded into dinnerware—called “bowls everlasting.” The village has a typical communal house, which serves as a social and economic center and source of new information and knowledge.

Van Phuc silk village, not far from Bat Trang, is where, centuries ago, silk was produced for the royal family. Taken from the silkworms that inhabited the area's mulberry trees, the first silk produced was an extreme luxury item. Later, as it became affordable to the general population, the industry grew, and today 90 percent of the village's 1,300 households depend on silk for their livelihood—as weavers, designers, garment makers, distributors, and shop owners and their employees. The village produces and sells two million meters of silk a year. The village has expanded its production from traditional glossy silk to embroidered, double layered, and wrinkled silks, adding colors, hues, and weights. Its downtown center features rows of silk shops displaying affordable and fashionable garments and silks.

Thailand, too, is filled with art and culture, much of it an integral part of its Buddhist traditions. As the only Asian country never to be invaded, Thailand's art is unscathed

and carefully preserved—much of it in its Buddhist Temples (WATs), particularly on the grounds of the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

The countryside also is home to many hill villages that specialize in a wide variety of art and crafts. In one crafts enclave north of **Chiang Mai in northern Thailand**, craftspeople commute from surrounding craft villages to produce and sell various crafts to tourists and to export



markets. Many artisans also maintain booths in Chiang Mai's weekly crafts and daily night markets, where prices definitely open to negotiation! Among the most beautiful crafts are the hand carved three-dimensional wood panels, pictures, and furniture, which are shipped all over the world. A single piece can take weeks to complete. Other enclaves of artisans make ceramics, metal art, jewelry, and even hand-painted umbrellas. Each had a showroom where tourists can watch artists work and buy their work.

Wood carvers from hill villages near Chiang Mai, Thailand

Creative & Cultural Skills, one of the United Kingdom's 25 Sector Skills Councils, has made available online a new set of creative blueprints for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The blueprints are intended to overcome the UK's weaknesses in education and training for creative sectors despite its emphasis in the creative economy. Scottish Enterprise and its partners, for example, support a Cultural Enterprise Office for the creative sector, which includes 2,665 companies. The skills reports include creative apprenticeships, creative and cultural leadership programs, career strategies, business knowledge in creative courses, and closer relationships with industry. For more information, see <http://www.ccskills.org.uk/IndustryInsight/CreativeBlueprint/tabid/81/Default.aspx>

Creative Economy Events

At the **Arkansas Craft School**, a partnership of the Arkansas Craft Guild, Ozarka College, and the Ozark Fork Center, the 2008-2009 **Apprenticeship Program** is underway in six craft media. Students are paired with expert artisans as mentors but they also get marketing and management courses. Completers get continuing education credit and a certificate. November 11-12, the Arkansas Craft School offered a two-day course focusing on the **Creative Craft Entrepreneur in the Creative Economy**, that featured First Lady Ginger Beebe; Ed Franklin, executive director of the Arkansas Association of Two Year Colleges; and Bob Mitchum, CraftNet member Arkansas State University-Beebe, as well as a report on RTS and Mt Auburn's creative economy study. Another program is scheduled for January 22-24: "Thrive—Not Merely

Survive—A Marketing Workshop for Studio Professionals and Gallery Owners” led by Bruce Baker for Middlebury, Vermont. For information contact arkcraftschool@mvtel.net.

Creative Economy Studies, Articles, and Videos

The **United Nations** recently released a 357-page **Creative Economy Report 2008**. This very comprehensive assessment makes a strong case for the potential of the creative economy to generate jobs while promoting social inclusion and cultural diversity but notes that most “developing countries are not able to harness their creative capacities for development.” The full report is for free download at http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ditc20082cer_en.pdf.

RTS and **Mt. Auburn Associates** are completing creative economy studies for the states of **Arkansas** and **Colorado**; for **North Carolina’s Piedmont Triad**, a 12-county region; and are in the early stage of a creative economy study of **Washington, DC**. The first three reports should be available on RTS’s web site by March.

On December 4, the North Carolina Arts Council released **Creative North Carolina**, a strategic plan for 2009-2013. It requests \$30 million for a variety of purposes, including support for a “Robust Arts Industry,” “Vibrant Communities,” a “Creative Economy,” and Prepared Children.” Its long-term goal is a state that includes a robust arts industry fueling a “knowledge-based creative economy,” “cities vibrant with the energy of arts,” and rural communities that “reach deep into their roots and celebrate the traditions that created them.” The plan is available for free download at <http://www.ncarts.org/elements/docs/strategicplan.pdf>.

Kartemquin, a well-known Chicago-based documentary film company, has completed a documentary called **Typeface: Contemporary Design in Conversation** in Two Rivers Wisconsin. It’s about a museum and print shop where **international artists and retired craftspeople merge their modern design and traditional techniques**. One weekend each month, some of the nation’s top designers converge on the town to discuss art, craft, and design, making the town’s museums a major tourist attraction year round. For more information, see <http://kartemquin.com/films/typeface>.

On November 27, The **New York Times** featured an article called “**Shifting Careers: Transforming Art into a More Lucrative Career Choice**.” Written by Marci Alboher, the article offered career paths and options for artists who hope to increase their earnings. Strategies include: 1) marketing more effectively, using their skills online through Etsy and Youtube; 2) creating unique markets, such as “Art on Track” in Chicago, an eight-car train with 200 emerging artists; and 3) working as designers, custom illustrators in the corporate world. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/27/business/smallbusiness/27shift.html? r=1>

And Wrapping Things Up for 2008...

Congratulations and best wishes to **Phil Psilos**, previously of RTS and one of the original architects of our creative economy work, who recently announced his engagement to **Dotty Foote**. A sculptor and photographer now living in Cambodia, Phil is still very involved in the art community.

