

## PENLAND'S BOARD: A TRUSTED RESOURCE

Penland's Board of Trustees welcomed eight new members at its fall meeting on October 15. The group includes Director of the Durham Arts Council **E'Vonne Coleman**; Greenville, NC businessman **Bill Freelove**; **Jim Rosencrance**, plant manager for Outboard Marine Corporation in Spruce Pine; **Paul J. Smith**, Director Emeritus of New York's American Craft Museum, and Winston-Salem investment counselor **Bill Watson**. New artist-trustees are metalworker and East Carolina University Assistant Professor **Linda Darty**; Penland neighbor **Jon Ellenbogen**, who operates the Barking Spider Pottery with his wife **Rebecca Plummer**, and weaver **Janet Taylor**, Professor of Art at Arizona State University and owner of Janet Taylor Studios.

These trustees join an active board which carries responsibility for approving the school's budget, assuring that there are adequate resources and staffing, setting policies, approving new programs and hiring the director. But beyond these corporate functions, the trustees are collectively and as individuals deeply involved in the life of the school. Each brings to the board a set of experiences and skills as well as personal dreams and ideas for Penland. The three profiles that follow give a glimpse of the commitment and love which is typical of Penland's trustees. Mary Ann Scherr finishes two terms at the end of December and rotates off the Board. Clarence Morgan is in his third year, and Max Wallace has just finished his first year.



Mary Ann Scherr

### CRAFT MEETS DESIGN

*"Teaching at Penland, I'm totally free to experiment. I went to the iron studio and picked up some iron; I can go there and get some information from a knowledgeable person who's ready to share any information he has. I learned anodizing here; I've made glass and used it in my work because it's here; I've used ceramics. A lot of artists don't move off their own center, but as a teacher it's really a responsibility to know a little bit about everything and to continue learning."*

Mary Ann Scherr may, in fact, know a little bit about everything. Her design career has ranged from hubcaps to medical jewelry, she's worked with biomechanical engineers and computer scientists, she holds patents on designs and metallurgical processes. For the past twenty-six years she's brought her work, her research, her talent, her energy, and lots of flowers to the Penland metal shop every summer.

Mary Ann shapes her very popular Penland classes around whatever problems she's grappling with in her own work. "I interpret my work as investigation and research into every area of the material I'm working with," she explained. "I'm not really interested in making the second cufflink unless the material itself is allowing me to investigate a whole new area. So I'm more concerned with discovery and the way things work. My teaching is part of that discovery: if I have seventeen in a class and I present a problem, I get seventeen different directions which show me there are different possibilities. I find that the students are really part of everything I do."

In the course of her long and distinguished career, Mary Ann has worked as an industrial designer, headed the Product Design Department at the Parsons School, sold work to distinguished museums and collections, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and taught innumerable classes and workshops. She may be best known, however, for her work designing jewelry to mask medical devices.

One summer at Penland she met a student who had undergone a tracheotomy. She found herself both fascinated and repulsed by the breathing device implanted in this woman's throat. "I was self-conscious, and that made her self-conscious, and finally we talked about it," Mary Ann recalls. She offered to make a necklace which would hide the device but not interfere with its function: a nice design problem. "I felt that if this could be hidden in a piece of jewelry, the person wearing it could function in a much more normal way." Since then, she's designed jewelry which monitors various body functions, and even one that prevents sleeping at the wheel.

Although she is more apt to talk about the debt she feels to Penland, Mary Ann has given generously to the school as teacher and Trustee. "Coming here has been so important to me. I have

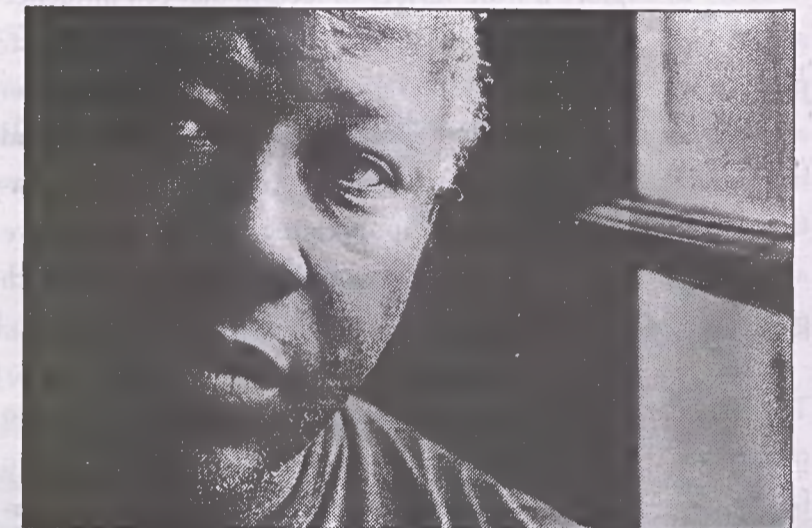
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met all the major artists in my field right here. Because of Penland, I know the field; it has taught me about metals. This kind of experience is very rich for me.

"My problem as a practicing artist is that I can't give the kind of money that I'd like to give to a place like Penland, so I try to give everything else....I think that my experience as a teacher brings an important element to the board, because I know what's important, I really know, and that experience they can't buy."

### FINE ART MEETS CRAFT

*"Penland has a way of making the teacher and the student more alike than not, whereas in academia the lines are much more clearly drawn; it's just set up that way. Here we eat together, relationships are relaxed, and I can learn from them more easily. Here it's maker meets maker."*



Clarence Morgan

Clarence Morgan should know. Although he is a busy producing artist, Clarence has spent fifteen years teaching in academia, first at East Carolina University, and now, as a Professor of Art at the University of Minnesota. In addition to being a Penland Trustee, Clarence serves on the boards of the Center for Arts Criticism and the College Art Association, and is on the Advisory Committee for Anderson Ranch Art Center. He views this aspect of his career as a necessary balance to his studio work. "I don't want to be a hermit or a recluse as an artist," he said, as we shared lunch at the Pines, "I know people who want to cut themselves off that way, but I think my personality is suited for this kind of public engagement."

Clarence's involvement with Penland began in the late '80s when then-director Verne Stanford invited him here, first as a visiting artist and then to teach. Drawing is a recent addition to the Penland program, but Clarence feels that its place at a craft school is clear: "Drawing as a vehicle to articulate ideas is important even for production...it is a specific tool." But, he continues, the value of drawing to the craftsman is greater than just draftsmanship. "It's very different from glass or ceramics where there are certain technical things that must be understood or applied first or you can't do anything at all."

His method of teaching he calls "drawing from the inside out." Clarence's own work is nonrepresentational, and in his classes he encourages his students to work from the visceral and the emotional as a way of getting at parts of their creative experience that may have been cut off while struggling to master a craft.

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