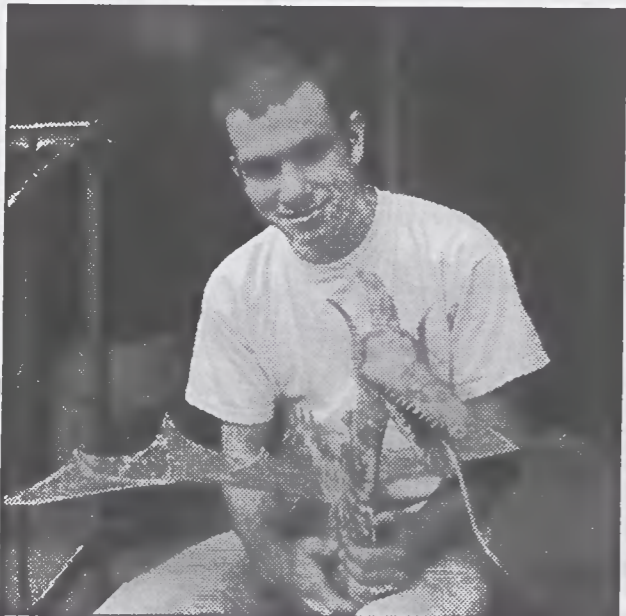


Trading Work for Craft Education

Even though the cost of a Penland class is subsidized by donations from a variety of sources, there are many serious students who cannot afford the tuition. The work/study and studio assistant programs are the school's most effective way of broadening its reach while also increasing the diversity of the student population. It's far from a free ride, however. Scholarship students pay partial tuition and they take substantial time from their class to work for the school. Studio assistants are students who take care of the day-to-day needs of the class. Many Penland donors direct their contributions toward the scholarship program, and make it possible for students like Katherine "Kowkie" Durst and Daniel Souto to pursue their craft education (and to wash dishes, set tables, assist instructors, and do what needs to be done).

One of the joys of being around Penland is the chance to watch a talented person come into an atmosphere of encouragement and instruction and catch fire. We got to see it again this summer with **Daniel Souto**, a cheerful and energetic young man from Venezuela.



Daniel Souto with a copper dragon weathervane.

Dana Moore

Daniel has always been attracted to metalwork, so when he finished high school he signed up for a welding class. After a few introductory sessions, the teacher told everyone to pick a project. Daniel made a candlestick and was promptly thrown out. "The teacher told me that candle holders were gay and he didn't want anything gay in his class," he explained with a smile.

But Daniel had the last laugh. He showed the piece to a friend and immediately got an order for ten more. So he set up a little welding shop in his father's house and started making things out of steel. "Someone would come in and ask if I could make a bench or a table and I'd just say, sure, and then figure out how to do it."

A broken arm kept him from taking a forging class taught by Penland neighbor **Suzanne Lipson**, who was

doing some workshops in his hometown. But she stayed around for a while and gave Daniel some lessons when the cast came off. Blacksmithing is a dying art in Venezuela—the anvil Suzanne used to teach him was the only one he'd ever seen—so he was excited when she told him about Penland and helped him apply for the work/study program.

He arrived in June, and did such exceptional work that he was accepted as studio assistant for the fall. Unfortunately, his arm started to bother him again and a few weeks into the class the pain became unbearable. Something had gone wrong when the bones were set and hours of hammering had exacerbated it.

Right now he's under orders to rest his arm, but he's still able to carry out his duties as studio assistant. "It's so frustrating," he says, "because I have so many ideas now." But Daniel isn't much for sitting around, so he's been making kites instead, and he's planning to get orthopedic surgery before he returns to Venezuela. A Memphis surgeon has offered his services pro-bono, a Penland classmate is giving Daniel a place to stay during his recovery, and his friends are planning a fundraiser if he can't afford the hospital bill.

Although it's been less than a year since he saw that first anvil, Daniel is expecting to get a lot of mileage out of his Penland training. Once his arm heals, he's going to set up his own shop to make anything anyone asks for (he's taking an anvil with him), and he already has people waiting to learn blacksmithing.

Before I spoke to him, Daniel had been described to me as a guy who could make an arc welder from a bucket of water, which I took as a colorful way of saying that he was a clever fellow. But when I repeated this remark to him, he started explaining how to do it (you actually need two buckets of water). He cautioned, however that it was only for emergencies. "It works great," he said "but you have to be careful or the water will boil." —Robin Dreyer ✧

Kowkie Durst began throwing pots at Supermud Pottery in New York City, where her first teacher was Penland student **Louise Harter**. When Kowkie moved upstate several years later, she became involved with a craft collective called The Women's Studio Workshop. There was no pottery there, so she converted a small, unused space and started organizing clay classes for the community.

This was a great experience, but it didn't leave her with much time for herself. She applied for the 1995 fall Concentration as a chance to focus on her own pots. She was especially excited about the Penland wood kiln. "The first thing I did at Supermud was help build a wood-fired kiln, and I thought that was the direction I wanted to go. So when I heard that the class was being taught by **McKenzie Smith** and that he fired with wood, I knew I had to do this."

She was accepted as a work/study student and spent the summer working three jobs to pay for the class. It was one of those times when all the Penland magic was working. "A bunch of us were sitting in a Chinese restaurant at the end of that class, and we didn't want to leave each other or this place. We kept saying, 'you're coming back next fall, right?' And then we got the idea of making wheels together."

Several weeks later, four students from the class got together at one of their houses and, working under the direction of Core student **Michael Hunt**, built four Korean-style kick wheels. "It was incredible," Kowkie recalls, "we just did it. We got together and bought the materials and it was like a continuation of the class."

She spent the rest of that year back in New York working, as well as organizing and teaching clay classes at the Women's Studio. She returned to Penland in the fall, once again on a work/study scholarship. And again, she didn't want to leave, so that winter she rented studio space at the school and then worked in the kitchen the following spring. This fall she's back again as a studio assistant.

Not only has the work/study program made Penland financially possible for Kowkie, but she says she appreciates the balance it brings to her time. "I like having other work when I'm here. It helps me organize my time and it breaks things up in a good way."

She says that what she's gotten most from being here is confidence. "Before I came to Penland," she says, "I wasn't sure if I could really do this. But I get confidence here. I get encouraged to do stuff. Even if you feel bad, you feel like you can get through something—because you're here; there's energy around you. Sometimes it's hard to have the confidence to pursue what you really want to pursue. But it's easier now that I've been at Penland." —Robin Dreyer ✧



Kowkie Durst with her favorite kiln.

Robin Dreyer



Back row: Andy Bird, Kenny Pieper, studio assistant Alex Hamilton, Emilio Santini. Front row: Helene Safire, Jeff Scherer.

Dana Moore

COOLING OUR JETS

Heat and glass work go together; there's no way around it. Even the flames from those innocuous looking torches in the lampworking studio can add up to a lot of BTUs. Three years of fully enrolled classes have demonstrated the need for better ventilation to dissipate the heat from the torches. Lampworking student **Helene Safire** has been a great friend of the glass program, and when she talked to studio coordinator **Kenny Pieper** this summer about what the studio needed, he mentioned improved ventilation as a priority. Helene was taking a class taught by **Emilio Santini** and her classmates included architect **Jeff Scherer** and master electrician **Andy Bird**. Jeff volunteered to do the technical calculations and design the system while Andy solved the electrical problems

involved. Both were able to work with intimate knowledge of the studio. Jeff also contributed \$1,000 toward the project.

Helene then assisted the school in presenting a proposal to the Charles A. Dana Foundation, which has granted \$10,000 for the ventilation system, as well as new table tops, a digital controller for the lamp-shop annealer (no more meltdowns!), and a glass cutting lathe for the cold-work shop. You never know what's going to come out of one of these classes.

CLAY STUDIO COORDINATOR NEEDED

Penland is looking for a new clay studio coordinator. Must have working knowledge of kilns, firing, clay bodies, etc. Contact Dana Moore, 704-765-2359.