

A Studio in the Future

This article is based on a proposal to the facilities allocations committee of the Penland Board of Trustees. The proposal was enthusiastically accepted and the board has identified the iron studio as its first priority for new construction.



Although there is great romance in the image of the blacksmith's shop with its dim light, dirt floor, and coal fires, the field of iron is changing and a studio based on that traditional image may not be the best place to

teach contemporary ironwork. Our studio began as an add-on (see previous page) which expanded into a maze of available space. It is now time to think about creating a viable work space for the Penland program as it stands today.

The two Penland Iron Symposia, held in 1989 and 1994 helped align Penland with a growing number of imaginative ironworkers who were establishing iron as an artistic rather than a purely functional endeavor. The first symposium also marked the beginning of a steady increase in iron enrollments.

The wide range of media available at Penland offers continuous interaction with other studios in a contemporary craft environment with a strong system of community support. Our current iron classes offer a mixture of traditional blacksmithing, nonferrous forging, sculpture, experimental work, tool and knife-making, beginning, intermediate, and advanced smithing, finishing, and patinas. Many of our classes include a strong design component. We are not currently equipped to teach casting.

By all indications, Penland's program is well respected and has been a landmark in the development of contemporary ironwork. It is also reaching a more diverse audience than ever before. The stereotypical ironworker, (seen as a middle-aged male) is no longer the norm. The average age of our iron students is thirty-three, and over the last four years, thirty-five percent of those students have been women.



However, the reputation of this program is based on the orientation of our classes rather than the quality of our facilities. If we wish to fully support the scope of the iron program and give our instructors the backing they need, we feel it is time to examine the need for a new facility.

Even a passerby can see that the studio is in need of repair. A closer look shows that the problems are not merely cosmetic. The studio is unheated; lighting and ventilation are inadequate; it is not accessible; bathroom facilities are in an adjacent building; and classroom and fabrication spaces are insufficient. The building is located close to student housing, turning the necessary noise levels of iron work into a social problem. In short, the studio is outdated, uncomfortable, badly located, and it no longer meets the needs of the program.

There has been an escalating interest in ironwork in recent years and although there are a number of other fine iron programs, most remain rooted in traditional processes and functional work; there are no craft schools taking the initiative to create a contemporary environment for the study of ironwork. We would like to take that role by creating a studio which addresses the needs of good teaching and the interests of the craft community.

We feel that the necessary modifications are so substantial

Dana Moore



that we need to build a new facility rather than trying to work with the existing space. A new building would give us ample construction time without having to interrupt the program. When the new studio is complete, the school would gain space badly needed for other uses.

GOALS FOR THE NEW IRON STUDIO

As a first requirement, the studio must have uniform and well-maintained basic equipment at every station. The building design will also address access, bathrooms, heat, ventilation, flooring, storage, and noise.

The studio will include a forging area, a grinding area, a large fabrication space, a sandblasting area, and a welding area with movable screens. It needs a clean, heated classroom space with chalkboards, drafting tables, and a storage area. There also must be storage for tools, coal, steel, tanks, and scrap metal.

For casting, we need a furnace, a muller, an open area for mold-building, and a sand pit. For big projects, a hoist may be necessary. The casting facility will be incorporated in an outdoor, covered area.

Flexibility in terms of space and equipment is the most important quality this teaching space should offer and the quality our current studio most lacks. The spaces are divided into small units which are inefficient and limit that ability of students to create large work.

The preliminary design calls for a 4800-square-foot building with ten coal forges, four gas forges, five forge tables, an overhead crane system, a covered loading dock, consolidated storage areas, an open fabrication area with rolling tables, and an outdoor casting facility.

Although there are several possible sites, the location for the new facility will be determined as part of the campus master plan. The projected budget is \$500,000, which includes road access, site preparation, landscaping, and equipment.

Jean McLaughlin and architect Frank Harmon have proposed that he use the design of this building as the focus of a graduate architecture class at N.C. State University. Frank is a proponent of studio-based learning, and he teaches from the

belief that architects must understand materials and craftsmanship.

Penland has already received a \$150,000 challenge grant from the Meyer Family Foundation in support of this project. The school is currently seeking funds from other private foundations and individuals. Funds will also come from specially designated sales at this year's Annual Benefit Auction.



Ann Hawthorne

This proposal was prepared by Dana Moore in consultation with Elizabeth Brim, Hoss Haley, and Marvin Jensen. Additional advice came from Christina Shmigel, Rick Smith, Peter Ross, and Jim Wallace. Hoss Haley prepared the preliminary studio design.



Dana Moore

Calling Auction Volunteers

Plans for our thirteenth annual benefit auction are well underway and we are looking for some good friends to help us put it all together. The auction weekend begins on Friday, August 7 and continues through the end of the day on Saturday, August 8. It is an exhilarating fundraiser that supports the needs of Penland's studios.

Volunteers are needed from Wednesday afternoon through Sunday morning to help us set up, produce the event, and clean up when it's over. Volunteers commit to at least two and one-half days of work, helping with such jobs as packing artwork, arranging flowers, parking cars, waiting on tables, scrubbing pots, running errands, making signs, gardening, and more. In exchange for your gracious assistance, we will try to make sure you have fun, and we will give you room and board for the days you work, along with a commemorative T-shirt.

If you are available for a hard working, exciting time, please call Jerolyn Morrison, our volunteer coordinator, at 828-765-2359.