

## 75th Anniversary Instructor Work Session



Everyone was invited to make a small vessel for a liqueur party at the end of the week. Blacksmith John Medwedeff couldn't find just the right mandrel in the metals studio to form his silver cup. So he went up to the iron shop and made this beautiful mandrel for the studio.

*I felt I had an opportunity to learn more new information in a shorter amount of time than just about any experience in my career. —John Medwedeff*



Potters Chuck Hinds and Ron Meyers, two of the most influential teachers of ceramics in the country, pulling work from a raku firing.

*For at least two years, I have been carrying around a spool of stainless steel thread and wondering if I could apply my weaving process to that new material. I don't know anyone who has woven with it and there are no real resources. Last week, I wove a piece on the loom and with the help of Tom McCarthy in the metals studio, I was able to torch the woven cloth, adding pattern and texture in a very unlikely manner for a weaver. This would not have happened without the ready access to another studio and people who were willing to help and offer advice. The realm of possibility has just been expanded. —Catharine Ellis*



Blacksmiths Elizabeth Brim and Christina Shmigel and weaver Janet Taylor examining a sample of cloth woven by Catharine Ellis (left) from stainless steel thread.

*Not enough can be said about the unique opportunity for a week of work and conversation unhampered by the pressures of teaching, which is usually why we're at Penland. —Rob Levin*



Metalsmiths Mary Ann Scherr and Marcia Macdonald after completing this commemorative piece. The structure and the ribbon were made in the wood studio by Paul Sasso, Doug Sigler, Dan McGuire, and Sylvie Rosenthal. Mary Ann and Marcia carefully covered it with pieces of copper (bling bling!).



From February 27 through March 5, Penland's studios hummed with the noise of instructors hard at work as the school hosted the Instructor New Works Retreat. This kick-off event for the anniversary year was a way to recognize and thank the instructors who have supported Penland throughout its history.

Three hundred former instructors with close ties to the school were invited to apply to attend the retreat. Their interest was tremendous. Participants were then selected at random from those who responded. While initial planning allowed for seventy-five artists' participation, some creative accounting allowed that number to increase to ninety-seven.

While several activities were planned for the week, the main desire was to allow six days of unstructured studio time. The artists arrived on Friday, despite a blanketing snowfall on the previous day, celebrating the arrival with a reception and exhibit of participant work at Northlight. The session ended the following Thursday with a liqueur-tasting party that showcased small vessels which everyone was encouraged to make during the week.

The retreat combined aspects of a great Penland session, a family reunion, a mini-sabbatical, and a symposium. Some artists worked in familiar media, some used the time to work as complete beginners (with help from the generous artists who served as hosts in each studio), and some moved around, combining materials along the way. New forms were explored, experienced teachers remembered what it's like to be a student, the potters convened formal discussions each afternoon, and informal exchanges happened all over the place—the energy level was amazing. When it was over, glassblower and Penland trustee Billy Bernstein spoke for many when he said the week felt like a new way of using the Penland facility for the benefit of craft.

Special thanks go to the National Endowment for the Arts and the Windgate Foundation for their support of this project, to Penland's hard-working studio coordinators for making things run so smoothly, and to the whole staff for cheerfully putting in the extra time and effort needed to make this event happen.

*It was a complete affirmation of how giving and positive the artistic way of life can be. There was no ego posturing — simply an open and celebratory attitude among peers — the best kind of situation to promote creativity. None of us wanted it to end. —Virginia Derryberry*

*Most of us work in small communities of artists and craftsmen and some of us in extreme isolation. The opportunity to work with a great variety of mature artists sharing processes and ideas will provide new energy and directions for everyone for years to come. —Gary Noffke*



Potters Kent McLaughlin and another potter greeting each other in the studio.