

The artists participating in *Narrative, Abstraction, Iteration* were asked their thoughts on Penland School of Craft by the curator, Jean McLaughlin. Jean was previously the Executive Director of Penland School of Craft for 20 years.

***Please describe your connection to the Penland community?
How do you interact within this community – defined as both a
community with a geographic proximity to the school and a
network made possible because of connections through the
school?***

Cathy Adelman

While living in Charlotte, Cathy was encouraged to take a class at Penland and she never looked back; she has been taking and teaching classes at Penland ever since. Returning to CA, Cathy and her husband Alan began sponsoring a long-standing partnership with the Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA), bringing students from inner city LA to study at Penland for over a decade. Cathy serves on Penland's Board of Trustees and maintains a home and studio just down the road from Penland School of Craft.

Ele Annand

Ele has been coming to Penland for the last 18 years and is currently in Penland's 3-year Resident Artist Program. Earlier in her career, she was also a Core Fellow at Penland for two years. "For me, Penland is the ideal learning environment — one that is open and supportive. I could never stay away and will continue to come back time and time again."

Elizabeth Brim

Elizabeth came to Penland first to study ceramics. With an MFA in printmaking, she got her first teaching job which also required her to teach ceramics. "But I fell in love with the Penland experience, particularly the constant interaction with creative people, which finally led me to give up the teaching job and move to Penland. While studying at Penland, I moved through clay to jewelry, finally finding blacksmithing when I went to the shop to make a tool. Soon I was learning traditional techniques to make my signature feminine sculptures from steel. Loyalty to Penland Iron is ongoing. I was the iron studio coordinator for 6 years, and during that time, while we planned and built the new iron studio, I also built my own studio next to my house. I am proud of what I have accomplished as a single woman."

Georgia Deal

"I came to be part of the Penland community initially when invited to teach at Penland School in the 90's. Treasuring each experience, I had to return. It is a unique place and the community

it provides is unparalleled. When my husband and I were thinking about retiring, we had ideas of various places that might afford us such a community and culture, but we hit the jackpot when we were given an opportunity in the Western Carolina area, and the decision to relocate from the D.C. became an easy one. We knew we would be coming to a strong community of artists and makers, and that has been very comforting. Although transitions always have their challenges, it is the Penland community that welcomed us with open arms, and we are very grateful for that.”

Artie Dixon

“My personal views about art and craft, the mountains and an expanding visual acuity have been percolating for years of interactions with Penland. Through classes in drawing, photography and printmaking, the artists I've both engaged with and those whose work I've observed from afar, I've been on this fortifying diet for some 20 years! Because of my sustained love of this creative community, I chose to further this relationship by locating my summer home nearby. And I'm also there each and every month as well! These connections nourish and expand my joy of observation, discovery and productivity. Penland is everything to me: both in the sense of being a world apart and an entity recognized and informed by the world at large.”

Courtney Dodd

“I came to Penland in 2005 with my brother to take an iron and glass class. I fell in love with Penland and came back for the 8-week concentration with an application for the Core Fellowship in hand. After completing that two-year work exchange for the school, I began working for Devin Burgess, who was in the Penland Resident Artist Program. Penland had given me the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive in the community I desperately wanted to be a part of since first visiting.”

Marie Fornaro

“I first came to live at Penland in 2010, when I was hired to be the Director's Assistant. I had earned a Bachelor's degree in art and design, but had stopped making work several years prior to being hired. Even though I wasn't actively making art, I knew that artists are my people, and I was drawn to the idea of living and working in a creative community. I worked as a full-time administrative employee for the school for about seven years, and during that time I was delivered once again to my artistic practice. I began by learning to make leather shoes, then took several classes in Penland's textile studios, and ultimately chose to pursue an MFA in fiber arts.

I still consider Penland my second home, even though I don't live there any longer. I worked at Penland for the majority of my 20s, which is a formative decade, and I now claim the identity of artist and craftsperson because of my experiences there. I can't understate the magnitude of this gift. I return to the mountain every few months either for work, to take a class, volunteer, or simply visit my chosen family. Several of my closest friends still live on the mountain. I chose my graduate program because of the connections I made at Penland, and because I knew if Penland people were involved in VCU's program, we would share an educational philosophy

and respect for material-based research. I now count at least a half dozen Penland people in my social circle in Richmond, VA. I know, without a doubt, that I will be involved with Penland in some way or another for the rest of my life.”

Ann Hawthorne

Ann lived in the Penland community first in 1976 as part of the Third Century Artist Program, assigned to the Toe River Arts Council as a photographer. In 1977 she became a NC Arts Council Visiting Artist with Mayland Community College and later taught classes at Penland. She was selected for a special two-month residency at Penland funded by the Warhol Foundation and the NEA in 2000 during which she and Dana Moore, Penland’s Program Director, collaborated on the project included in the exhibition. This project raised money for the John Neff Scholarship Fund. Ann divides her time between Washington DC and a cabin in Yancey County.

Diane Kent

“50 years ago, my husband, David lived and worked at Penland for a year. He loved the place, but it was not the time. However, 1998 was the time – we had both retired and were looking for a place to live so we came back to the mountains. I have been a student and studio assistant at Penland. Penland has been an important part of my return to drawing, both from classes I have taken at Penland and the people I met there. There is a sense of community that pervades Penland, even if you never leave your studio. I live in Burnsville and journal most days as a response to my walks. My journaling is a way of documenting the nature that surrounds me and acknowledging how it informs my life. The classes at Penland have both stimulated and responded to this documentation practice. Without Penland, we probably wouldn't be living here.”

Stacey Lane

“I moved to the Penland area in 1997 to become the metals studio coordinator at Penland School of Craft, thinking I would spend two years in the position and then return to Washington, DC. In 1999, I transitioned to the Program Assistant position, bought a house, and met Michael Kline who had recently arrived for the Penland Resident Artist Program. We married in 2001 and have two daughters who were raised running around Penland. My work at Penland for the last 15 years has been focused on creating and nurturing connections between the school and its many local communities, especially the public school system. I have deep respect and affection for the community surrounding Penland. I currently work as Manager of Community Collaboration and as a teaching artist in the schools. My volunteer activities include hosting a reading club and game night at two local public libraries and acting as a lunch buddy at Mitchell High School.”

Janet Link

"I sometimes call myself a Penland bad penny - my first time there was in 1997 and I've been turning up regularly ever since. I've been a student, a dish washer, a studio assistant, an instructor, a visiting artist, a winter resident, a friend and a supporter. Although I've never lived there, it occupies a central place in my life and I feel like a member of its community, which has provided me with an enduring and expanding network of valuable personal and professional relationships."

Jeannine Marchand

Jeannine participated in Penland's two-year Core Fellowship program and returned to the Penland community after graduate school to live among community-minded friends and artists.

Courtney Martin

"I moved to NC in 2002. I arrived in winter, stayed with friends in Buladean, and got a hold of the Toe River Arts studio tour map from the Mitchell News Journal. I called every potter on the map, visited their studios, and asked them if they had work for an aspiring potter. A few folks hired me, and after a year in Asheville, I moved here. In 2003, I rented a room in Jo Vrana's house (she was a former Penland registrar) a couple of miles from the school. Living there, I worked for lots of local potters (Terry Gess, Cynthia Bringle, Shawn Ireland) and did a work/trade apprenticeship with Michael Kline. In 2005 John Geci and I started dating, and I moved into his place which is our current home. He had bought the property about 4 months before we started dating. In 2007 I built my wood kiln on our land, and we built my studio in 2009/10. In the meantime, I was taking and assisting classes at Penland, and spent most of my social time with other Penland students, core, residents. I taught my first Penland class in 2017, and I am teaching again in the summer of 2020. The community of potters here is incredible. We regularly share knowledge and materials, and we work together on sales (the Spruce Pine Potters Market and Cousins in Clay are examples.) My Penland community extends nationally. Living near the school we have had the opportunity to become good friends with the most incredible makers. I am grateful to have these connections!"

Rachel Meginnes

"I originally came to Penland as part of the Resident Artist program in 2012 having never taken a class or taught at the school. Penland was a place that I had always known about but never had the resources or means to get there. Being a resident artist from 2012-2015 rooted me in a place where I felt confident to pursue a life in making - surrounded by people who believe that making matters and who value this need to make.

I currently live 10 minutes from the school and maintain a studio practice in a private studio at the bottom of the knoll. In 2018, I began an off-campus program for college students at Penland, where students spend four months studying hands-on craft, craft history, and business practices. This year, I was hired as Penland's Special Programs Manager where I oversee the Resident Artist program, the Core Fellowship program, the Visiting Artist program, the Andrew Glasgow Writing Residency, as well as the Winter Residency program. I remain firmly connected to the school and its network.”

Eleanor Richards

“Ten years ago in my undergraduate program I developed a serious curiosity for this medium (wood) and the concepts it allowed me to explore. In graduate school my conceptual direction and methods of presentation strengthened, but my technical approaches needed development. Therefore, I pursued a residency at the Appalachian Center for Craft where eventually my ideas and my ability to execute them successfully took hold. I took this experience to Penland, where I developed new relationships, skills, and work, all of which broadened the way I envision my future. As a studio coordinator it was always a priority for me to live within walking distance from the school itself. Housing of this proximity can be sparse at times and as such I moved into a few different spots to keep this aim in mind. Living close to the school allowed me to take full advantage of the staff, core fellows, resident artists, and incoming faculty and students. These people became a large cast of family and friends that kept me excited to return to my place of work each day. I wanted the wood studio to be a space for me to create work in, in order to do that I would come in during the early morning and stay late into the evening. I found these times to be some of my favorite; always revealing unexpected thoughts, conversations, and a deeper appreciation for the space and surrounding environment. I believed the more time I spent in the studio, whether it was working as a coordinator, making my own work, or just socializing, the greater the impact from the studio, the school as a whole, and the surrounding community would be. This philosophy reinforced the importance of being willing and open to what the present moment has to offer.

One of the things I've enjoyed most as wood studio coordinator is the constant change of pace and scenery; even though I came into the same building each day, what was happening inside the studio walls was always changing. From boat building to instrument making to timber framing to the production of sculpture, furniture, and functional objects through wood, concrete, cork, and more—these are a few of the wide-ranging approaches the wood studio has the capacity to explore. This job allowed me to develop a core value system including a love of working with people, caring deeply about the importance of education through craft, and an enthusiastic approach to maintaining a welcoming and high functioning wood studio atmosphere. I thank Penland School and the surrounding community for supporting my growth and giving me the time and space to learn about both the studio's needs and my own as a growing artist; it continues to be transformative in countless ways.”

Gay Smith

“I live right up the road from Penland School. The Penland community is rich with successful women artists, and Penland's “family” extends globally beyond the school's geographical boundaries. I came to Penland through the good will of Cynthia Bringle. I'd been looking to take

a workshop from a successful woman studio potter at a time when most workshops were taught by men. She was a stellar example and mentor who invited me to be an assistant at Penland. Now, there is no challenge finding women teachers in the field. My artwork is exponentially better for being connected with the Penland School community ; seeing what my neighbors are making, what instructors offer in classes, acts as profound inspiration and motivation to continue to grow in my work, to take the risks necessary to making better work.”

Jan Williams

“I feel so fortunate to have chosen the crafts. In college, I never once felt treated differently than my fellow male students. After I graduated, I had the good fortune to work with men and women in a challenging rekindling of the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works and loved my coworkers and what we were accomplishing. I chose to take a leave of absence to take a Fall Concentration at Penland because I had a nagging feeling that the glassblowing I had experienced at college was calling me. I was the only woman in the glassblowing class at Penland that session, but I was treated with honest respect. I have often wondered if I choose the crafts because it was a place where we were all respected if we worked hard. Maybe this is why women have accomplished so much in the crafts—because of that respect. Or maybe they got the respect because they accomplished so much. I don’t know, but every day we should feel blessed or bloody lucky to have chosen this path.

Those summers in West Virginia with Grandma Janie had given me a deep love of the mountains, of the southern dialect, of the country music, and I longed to stay at Penland. When Richard and I discovered Young Cove in Bakersville, only 12 miles from Penland, we thought it was a good place to settle. We built a studio and raised a family there, gifted with kind hard working neighbors and a community of artists that radiated out from Penland in all directions. So we had two very distinct communities to interact with -- our local neighbors with whom we joined the local fire department and sent our children to school and played sport -- and our artist contemporaries with whom we shared our work, our passions, and our politics. Every so often we would go back to Penland to teach...such a joy! To be on the mountain again, surrounded by students and all of the activities of the school. It grounded us, and reminded us of why we had moved here, why it was so important to be part of an ever-growing artist community. Because of the school, old friends returned, new apprentices were hired, we were exposed to a growing knowledge in our field of craft where everyone shared information all of the time. We never regretted settling here in Mitchell County. Both Richard and I feel that we have experienced a life rich with meaning, creativity, and accomplishment, not all of it in the arts.”

Laura Wood

“I came to Penland for the first time in the very early years of my creative path. I was first swept away by the campus. I had never seen anything like it - a far cry from academia yet perfectly structured to nurture an education in craft. I observed people of all ages and professional levels. It was at Penland that I realized a future career in craft was a real possibility. I continued to come to Penland nearly every summer and each time I had a unique and memorable experience. Later, I assisted courses and eventually taught an eight-week concentration in 2016. As a current resident artist at Penland, I am thankful for the continued support to my

practice. Penland is a source for creative strength. The people I have connected with through the years as a result of coming to the school are lasting relationships that I cherish.”