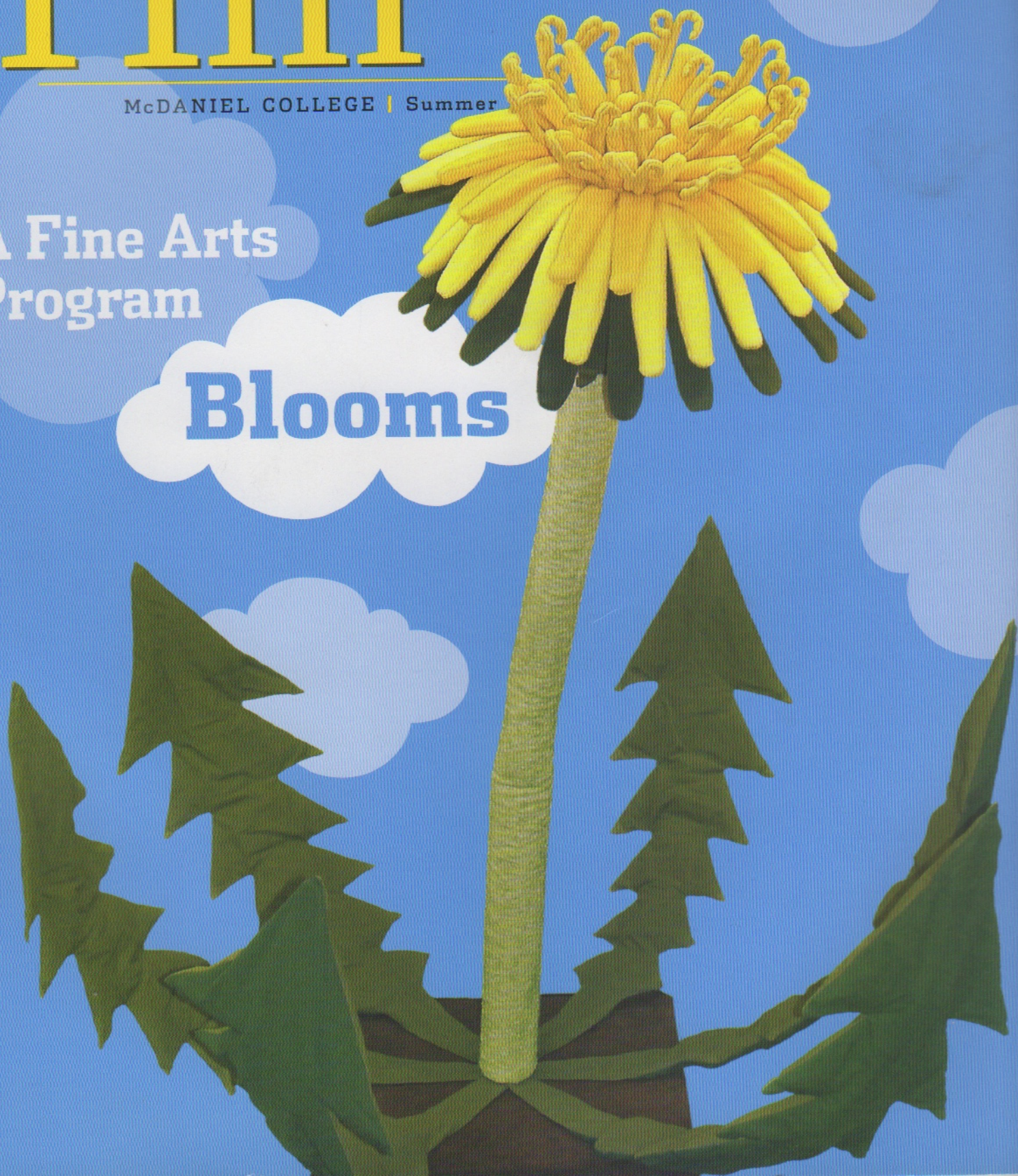


The Hill

McDANIEL COLLEGE | Summer

A Fine Arts
Program

Blooms



've really been trying to establish my own kind of style. There's still a trace of Steve in my paintings but I really don't mind because he's an amazing artist.'

—Bobby Coleman '09, MFA '11 candidate, American University



As director of the Esther Prangley Rice Gallery, Pearson has been proactive in bringing to campus a wide variety of high-quality art, from the figurative and representational to the conceptual, for the benefit of his students. Through his various residencies and gallery shows, Pearson has made connections with artists all over the world and he often persuades them to come to campus to lecture and critique students' work.

Advanced Studio students are required to write critical reviews of each of the exhibitions and he submits the most insightful articles for publication in the widely read BMore Art blog (published by Cara Ober MS'98). He also assigns summer reading. Students must follow the writings of three current art critics — last year it was Roberta Smith, Ken Johnson and Jerry Saltz — and create a journal with references to the artists mentioned, their work, and a glossary of terms.

"It lets them know what's going on in the contemporary art world so they're not working in a vacuum," says Pearson, who many students have dubbed a "walking thesaurus" because of his ability to cite from memory artists, both living and dead, with similar styles or who influence each other.

As for student exhibitions, Pearson raised the standards so only the best work gets showcased.

"In the past, everyone was able to show, which created a false impression of the realities that face the artist after graduation. Students now realize that they must endeavor to work hard to earn the privilege to exhibit their work," observes Michael Losch, who teaches art history and often collaborates with Pearson. "The overall quality of the student shows each year has risen significantly and many people have noticed this fact."

With Pearson's encouragement, students have started entering outside juried exhibitions, winning spots over more experienced, professional artists.

"Steve has an amazing eye for recognizing potential in people. He always made us feel that we could do anything we set our minds on accomplishing and he would be here to help us," says Tara Russell '09, an MFA candidate at University of Delaware. "And he's still here to support us. I talk to him at least once a week."

Central to all this success is the strong sense of community that has blossomed among the art students. Losch observes: "There's a palpable sense of electricity and inspired excitement."

A mentor program pairs more-seasoned majors

with underclassmen. The regular peer critiques in Advanced Studio condition students to talk about their own work and to offer feedback on one another's work with honesty and respect. "I've never been intimidated by the grad school crits because I grew a thick skin at McDaniel," Russell says with a laugh.

And the Art Club, which Pearson founded and for which he serves as advisor, brings together students from all years to work on group projects, hear talks by visiting artists and go on field trips. A perennial favorite is the trip Pearson leads every semester to the Chelsea district of New York City, where more than 300 galleries are crammed into just a few blocks.

The new Art Studio addition — a 2,400-square-foot, two-story, light-drenched space — brings all art classes under one roof and enhances that sense of community. Pearson can often be found there, in the studio side of his office, snatching moments between classes or in the evening hours to work on his own projects.

Married, with a young son, Pearson still makes time for helping his most promising students apply to master's of fine art programs at big-name graduate schools. He photographs their work, helps them assemble portfolios, edits their artist statements and writes recommendation letters. This academic year, 11 of his former students were pursuing MFA degrees in highly competitive programs — often with substantial or full scholarships. Two more are on their way next year.

"When I was getting my portfolio together, he was willing to literally drop everything and come over and help me at 10 or 11 at night," says Bobby Coleman, a painter who just finished the first year of his MFA program at American University. "There's no way I would have gotten to grad school without Steve."

An MFA program can be crucial to an artist's development, says Pearson, who earned his MFA at the top-ranked Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art. It offers two or three years of concentrated study under excellent faculty among exceptional peers. And the degree itself opens a lot of doors to jobs in the art world, from teaching to curating to operating a gallery.

"If I see that a student is approaching their work with a lot of talent and ingenuity, I start the grad school talk," he says.

Pearson stays in close contact with all his former protégés — just check out his Facebook wall, which is full of images of their work and an ongoing conversation about their progress. He brings them back for talks on campus, visits them at their graduate school studios and makes it to most of their shows.

And they, of course, return the favor. "These are my colleagues and peers now," Pearson says.

What follows are brief portraits of some of the emerging artists to come from the Studio Art program.

Tyler Mullan '10



**MFA candidate '12, with a specialization in sculpture,
American University**

Her latest natural material? Beeswax.

AHEAD OF THE GAME: Grad school bills won't be an issue, thanks to a full scholarship.

AN EYE FOR SCIENCE: With a double major in studio art and biology, Mullan takes much inspiration from the natural world and challenges to its existence.

EARLY SUCCESS: Her work, "It's Not Easy Being Green: Environmentally-based Deformities in Frogs," was featured in a national juried exhibition at the Allegheny Arts Council in Cumberland, Md.

Chloe Watson '07

MFA'10, Mount Royal School of Art, Maryland Institute College of Art

Bedrooms and intimate spaces of her past have become the primary settings for Chloe Watson's current paintings. "I have been using an entirely new approach with this series — lighting geometrically shaped paper cutouts in my studio, sketching them from observation, and then translating that sketch into an element in a painting."

OF NOTE: She was among only 15 accepted from a candidate pool of 270.

KUDOS: Program Director Fran Barth selected her for one of four graduate assistantships and says, "She has amazing management skills and interpersonal relationship skills." On top of that, she can weld. "She came in drawing, and now she does these kind of line-drawing sculptures in space," Barth says. "She's developed her own work and her own ideas. She's grown a lot over these two years."

CLASSROOM ASPIRATIONS: Watson was a teaching intern for MICA undergrads and would like to find a college faculty position.

MCDANIEL LEGACY: Both of her parents are alumni. She started at New York's Pratt Institute, but was disillusioned and transferred to McDaniel, where she says she was "far more productive" under Pearson's tutelage.

COMMUNITY MATTERS: "Staying in touch is a huge part of the art world. I credit Steve for making sure we all know about and go to each other's openings and shows."





Tara Russell '09

MFA candidate '11, University of Delaware

"I love abstraction. I'm dealing with the psychological processes of the mind in interpreting color and form."

WHY I'M HERE: "I always wanted to do studio art but there's a common misconception that you'll starve. Steve Pearson made us all understand that if you pursue higher education you will be able to make a fine living doing what you love. MFAs open the doors to grant programs, residencies, teaching, gallery work, curating, critical writing..."

LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY: "I was lucky enough to be offered a full-tuition scholarship and a graduate contract, so I teach a class every semester. They cover all my living expenses and give me a studio and I teach. How often do you get an opportunity to do what you love for two years and get paid for it?"

MY PARENTS' BLESSINGS: "I remember when I got my e-mail with the scholarship. I've never seen my father so happy. He actually danced around the room."

Rachel Held '10

MFA candidate '12, Rinehart School of Sculpture,
Maryland Institute College of Art

EARLY SUCCESSES: Her fiber chess set, with a dandelion theme, was one of five finalists selected out of 800 entries in the Fibers: Decorative category of the NICHE 2010 awards, which recognize excellence and innovation in American and Canadian fine craft. Also, her 6-foot fiber dandelion (shown on the cover) and two other pieces were accepted into the Fantastic Fibers exhibition at the Yeiser Art Center in Paducah, Ky.

BEHIND THE SCENES: "I had to mail the dandelion down to Kentucky in pieces with 12 pages of instructions and diagrams of how to put it together. They sent me pictures once it was complete. It looked good."

ARTIST STATEMENT: "Dandelions, to me, are a source of comfort and reassurance in times of stress and anxiety because they are beautiful fragments of nature that tell a familiar, cyclical story, and remind me of my childhood. They begin as seeds, grow into flowers, transform into puffs, and dissolve into new seeds, like the life cycle of mankind."

*"I don't know what my work will look like in two years.
That's a cool idea sometimes. Sometimes it's scary."*





KATHERINE SIFERS

"Currently I focus on the connections between food, science and agriculture."

Chanan Delivuk '08

MFA '10, George Washington University, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences,
with a specialization in New Media, Video and Performance

TOP PRIZE: Her untitled installation piece, which featured her own studio as a work in progress, won first place in the 2010 annual Department of Fine Arts and Art History Award Show and a \$1,500 prize.

OTHER RECOGNITION: Delivuk was awarded a graduate teaching assistantship, which covered half her tuition and provided some income.

LATEST WORK: Her thesis show comprised three simultaneous video projections on gallery walls. In each, the artist appears to be speaking but is actually lip-synching both her questions and another person's answers from interviews she conducted with professionals representing various aspects of the food industry.

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT: "I aim to become an animal activist and a butcher, a farmer and a lobbyist, because these people and their personal politics are sometimes very different and I'd like to provide a platform for where these ideas can all come together. The context of the self is disrupted through these performances — the specifics of my and the interviewees' identity become blurred."

PERSONAL RELEVANCE: "Having conversations with people who work in the food industry enables me to see past the reasons that I am vegan and has allowed me to find links between what I eat and the larger world." ■