Dear Alumni and Friends of the Department of Art and Art History,

In a time of disquieting and even dramatic change, it is important that we all remember the enduring purpose of a university and the central place of the arts in its educational mission. The future of the Department of Art and Art History is less dependent on the various buildings in which its classes are taught than it is on its faculty and students, who form its essential backbone.

In this light I would like to welcome three new members of our faculty. Professor Kevin Kissell, whose teaching focus is in Fashion Design and Merchandising, came to us from Colorado State University, where he teaches. A graduate of Cranbrook and newly arrived from Washington University in St. Louis, Professor Eric Troffkin has joined our faculty in the area of Sculpture. Professor Margi Weir came to us from the University of California at Los Angeles, by way of New Mexico where she was a practicing artist for many years. She is teaching in the area of Painting and Drawing. We are also fortunate in having been able to engage the continuing services of Systems Integrator Ian Chapp, who is in charge of technical support for the Visual Arts Library (formerly the Slide Library) which has essentially completed the transition from the use of slides to that of electronic images. While the ability to locate and license all needed or desired images in digital format is next to impossible due to the heavy cost, we now are able to meet at least the basic needs of the courses we teach.

We are indeed enriched by the presence of such talented and accomplished new colleagues. Our students are as lively, diversified, and eager as ever. We are especially pleased to note that the number of undergraduate majors in the various fields that we offer has risen from 702, last year’s number, to 783. Thus we look forward to the near and long term future with a fuller, more invigorated Department.

Speaking of the future, the Department is currently involved in discussing possible collaborative interchanges among the various areas we teach. This will make boundaries between such areas as ceramics and industrial design; painting, drawing, and printmaking; fashion design and fibers; and metalsmithing and sculpture more fluid so that each of these related areas will be reinforced by the other. This integration will emphasize the intrinsic connections between the many areas we teach and, hopefully, suggest to our students the potential excitement of zigzagging across boundaries that were once fixed. Our future will be colored, we expect, by the presence of visiting artists (made possible by the generous bequests of Elaine L. Jacob and James Pearson Duffy) who will add multiple new dimensions to our teaching mission. We fervently hope that the future will also bring more consolidation to our Department, whose faculty and students are currently scattered in different buildings, so that exciting discussions and interchanges on subjects of common interest can become a reality in our pedagogical mission as well as in the daily experiences of students. Consolidation would also enhance the scholarship of the faculty because it would stimulate discussion and the discovery of new interests.

The enthusiasm of looking forward is, however, not without its accompanying sadness. We have, unfortunately, lost a long-time faculty member, the distinguished medievalist scholar, Professor Sarah Bassett, to another university. Irreplaceable as she seems, we will be searching this year for her replacement. Professor Bassett was honored at a late August reception, which also welcomed the new members of the faculty, at the home of the departmental Chair, co-hosted by Terry Kerby, the Visual Arts Librarian. Professor Bang Geul Han also left us after two years here.

The departmental offices too, have changed. Since the untimely death of Steve Kram, the former office Manager whom so many of you will remember, Marie Persha, whom many of you also know, has been promoted to serve in that position. The new member of our “family,” who so enthusiastically stepped into Marie’s shoes as departmental accountant, is Susan Griffin, who holds an MBA from Case Western University.

We are immensely gratified by the continued generosity of alumnae, alumni, and other friends of this Department. This generosity has enabled us to give new life to some programs and to continue others that, in times of financial constraint, might otherwise have been diminished. While many of these gifts are designated for certain programs or events, the undesignated gifts (both small and large) enable us to focus on invigorating areas that have the greatest current needs. We are indeed most grateful to our donors, anonymous and named alike, and we look forward to continuing to rely on their magnanimity and dedication to help us move forward in these difficult times. At present we are especially in need of endowed faculty positions. Without them we are at the mercy of institutional downsizing and the University’s perception of where the increasingly inadequate funding should be directed.

In discussions with the College Art Association, the umbrella professional association for creative artists, art historian scholars, and museum personnel, the Department members share a commitment to the fact that higher education is an investment in the future. In partnership with the College Art Association, we believe that the traditional classroom and the traditional relationship between those who teach and those who learn can be enhanced by the exploitation of new educational media and processes. While they are not a substitute for basic educational principles, these enhancements help us do what we do better. The contact between student and teacher is essential, for it instills learning, satiates curiosity, and stimulates growth, maturity, and preparation for the professional world. We remain devoted to attracting the best faculty, students, and staff to this Department. The vibrancy of our interchanges and the strength of our commitment to wisdom and the pursuit of knowledge are at the heart of our endeavors.

Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier
Professor and Chair
A retrospective of the work of Professor Margi Weir is scheduled from November 20 to January 23 at the Las Cruces Museum of Art in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Entitled “Three Decades of Inquiry,” it features her work in multiple mediums.

Professor Judith Moldenhauer accompanied four Graphic Design students who received Undergraduate Research Awards to Paris in June, where they produced and presented a project at a conference (“Data Design for Decisions”) whose objective was to examine how statistics affect our lives by focusing on the way information is visualized, interpreted, and communicated.

A specially constructed garment titled Blossoms and Rainfall, designed by Professor Kevin Kissell, was selected for exhibition in the Fiber Art Live Gallery for the 2009 Design Exhibition at the International Textile and Apparel Association meeting in Seattle in October. Also in the realm of textiles, a work by Professor Urban Jupena was exhibited in a show entitled “Connections” at the Small Tapestry International 2009 in the San José Museum of Quilts and Textiles from May to July; the show travelled to Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana where it was exhibited in August and September. He showed another weaving in August in the 50th Anniversary Exhibition of the Michigan League of Handweavers.

A solo exhibition of works by Professor Evan Larson was presented at Spaces’ experimental Space Lab Gallery in Cleveland in July and August. The exhibition was titled “Permeability, Transformation, and the Neutral.” Work by Professor Larson was also shown during the fall in Grand Rapids at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art.

During the summer, Professor Brian Madigan travelled to Ravenna, Florence, and Rome in order to visit museums and archaeological sites connected with his completion of a new book and the beginning of a new project. He is also participating in a collaborative digital project that addresses the nature and history of images in the ancient and early medieval Mediterranean area. Prof. Madigan has just been elected to serve on the University’s Academic Senate.

Professor Eric Troffkin’s solo exhibition, entitled Not Real, will be presented at Good Citizen Gallery in St. Louis, Nov. 20 - Dec. 19. His sculptural objects are three dimensional explorations of the lens-based, visual phenomena known as “lens flares,” colorful geometric arrays of light that appear in film when the camera points directly at a light source.

Professor Dora Apel was in Israel and Palestine for two weeks interviewing artists and working on a new book. There she presented a paper at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. An article by her entitled “Memorialization and its Discontents: America’s First Lynching Memorial,” was published in the Mississippi Quarterly Journal of Southern Culture.

Work by Professor John Richardson was exhibited in two shows, one a mixed media invitational field at Central Michigan University in February, in which he showed six works, and the other a one-person exhibition of his sculpture in October at the Pittsburg State University Gallery in Pittsburg, Kansas.

A research paper by Professor Christiane L. Joost-Gaugier, entitled “Concinnity in Italian Renaissance Architecture,” was presented at an international conference in Geneva in May. Three new art historical book reviews by her were published in recent issues of The Sixteenth Century Journal. A new book by her, Pythagoras and Renaissance Europe, has just been published by Cambridge University Press. It considers mathematics, philosophy, architecture, and art from Dante to Galileo.

The most exciting faculty news in Detroit at this time is, however, the annual Faculty Show which is currently on exhibit in the Art Department Gallery at Wayne State University. This year it is particularly ambitious, diversified, and thrilling. The exhibition closes October 23.
In March of this year Steve Kram, beloved Office Manager of our Department, passed away, the victim of a heart attack at 45. During the twenty-six years Steve worked for Wayne State University, he was the mainstay of the entire Department. He knew well all the intricacies of its many academic and creative areas – including art history, industrial design, sculpture, painting and drawing, printmaking, photography, interior design, electronic arts, graphic design, fashion design and merchandizing, ceramics, metalsmithing, and fibers, two art galleries and a visual arts laboratory. These areas are situated in four different buildings, in addition to a professional foundry equipped to make aluminum, bronze, iron, and glass. He knew all these buildings well, as he knew our faculty and our undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom he counted among his personal friends. Steve bore his responsibility to the practicalities of the functioning of the departmental offices and its staff with good cheer and with a remarkable, albeit somewhat droll, sense of humor. He facilitated and coordinated departmental events, exhibitions, classes and classrooms, searches, travel, purchases, scheduling and the inevitable problems of building maintenance. In all these functions, his work was devoted.

Steve’s dedication was in every way critical to the academic success of every student. He developed and implemented new systems to make the Department more efficient. While his job description stipulated that he work 7.5 hours per day, he normally worked 9 hours per day. One example of his exceptional achievement is in the fact that, completely on his own, he approached a large corporation in the area (Behr) on behalf of the Department in order to suggest that it might make a unique contribution to the education of our students. This resulted in a remarkable exhibition that created significant opportunities for professionalizing art studio students. Though he was diligent in giving to animal shelters, but one example of his exceptional humanity was his rescue of a cat that had been beaten almost to death and thrown out in the winter cold by a neighbor of his.
Perhaps the most famous graduate of Wayne State University's Art and Art History Department (in 1955), James Lee Byars was recently honored posthumously with a feature article in Art in America, and we would like to honor him too. Born in Detroit in 1932, Byars was influenced early on by the Yamasaki gardens and architecture he experienced while a student at Wayne State University, which led him to spend his formative years as a professional in Japan where he also studied traditional Japanese ceramics and papermaking. Byars began his career, amazingly, with a debut exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1958 where his works would again be exhibited in 1976. From then on, his fame grew in tandem with the complexities of his work which was centered on a combination of installation sculpture, performance art, and writing. His works were shown world-wide, in a constellation of major museums, galleries, and exhibition venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, galleries and museums in Antwerp, Brussels, Berlin, Kyoto, Tokyo, Bern, Geneva, Basel, Cologne, Turin, Stockholm, Madrid, Granada, Paris, London, Valencia, Santa Fe, Amsterdam, Bremen, Vienna, Chicago, New York, Rome, Houston, Aspen, Munich, San Francisco, Berkeley, Cairo, and many other places. He was honored by exhibitions in world-renowned venues such as Documenta in Kassel, Germany, where he was invited three times, and the Venice Biennale, where he was invited twice, and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris where his work was shown numerous times. One of his most famous creations, an award-winning work entitled The Perfect Smile, was the first immaterial work of art to be collected at Cologne's Ludwig Museum. In the U.S., he was especially noted for The Death of James Lee Byars, a work in which he enacted his own symbolic death clad entirely in gold leaf in a spectacular room containing only a gold sarcophagus. This was presented at the Guggenheim Museum in New York; in an earlier version of this work, in Brussels, he had performed in a gold lamé suit, Practicing Death, a persistent theme in his work. “James Lee Byars: The Perfect Silence,” was a major retrospective exhibition at the Whitney Museum in New York. James Lee Byars, who died in Cairo in 1997, will be remembered in a special exhibition of his work at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit next year.
The accomplishments of our alumni and alumnae give us much to boast about. In recognition of the fact that their professional activities are too numerous to report at once, even if we knew them all, we provide a small sampling here as in every issue of this Newsletter.

The contributions of Jerome and Evelyn Ackerman to American design were featured in a retrospective exhibition at the Mingei Museum in San Diego. For more than forty years, the Ackermans created tapestries, ceramics, metal wares and mosaics for their Los Angeles-based firms, Jenev Design Studio and ERA Industries. Christine Bossler will celebrate her first solo exhibition, entitled Repel—Adapt, at the Luke and Eloy Gallery in Pittsburgh in 2010. A member of the Society of North American Goldsmiths, she is also included in a number of group shows. Her second catalog, Jewelry + Objects Exhibition, mentions past and current Wayne State University metalsmithing students. After receiving a BFA in Drawing from Wayne State University, Michael Budowick earned an MA in Medical and Biological Illustration at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is currently an Art Foundation and Illustration instructor at the Art Institute of Atlanta.

Julie Mahoney, who earned her MFA at Wayne State University, is now a Professor of Drawing at Western Illinois University. Marilyn Marchionni is now a graphic designer for the Division of Continuing Education at Indiana University — Purdue University Fort Wayne.

Linda Margolin recently celebrated her long career in a Senior position in the Education Department of The Detroit Institute of Arts. After earning her BFA and MFA degrees at Wayne State University, Loretta Markell has exhibited her paintings and prints in venues such as the Detroit Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Michigan Print Exhibition at Alma College. Art History MA graduate Daniel Mato is currently Professor Emeritus of Art History at the University of Calgary. He has conducted field research in Africa and has curated exhibitions of African art in Europe, the U.S., and Canada. He is now a Research Affiliate at the University of Ghana.

Bruce McColl, who received his MFA in Painting from Wayne State University, had a solo exhibition entitled Remnants at the Soapbox Gallery in Brooklyn. Sandra Osip exhibited a sculpture installation entitled After Life. The Department is especially pleased to congratulate eight former students who have been awarded prestigious Kresge Artist Fellowships in the Visual Arts. They are Shiva Ahmad, class of 2000 and 2003; Lynne Avadenka, class of 1978, 1981; Kristen Beaver, class of 2004; Ed Fragla, class of 1980; Gordon Newton, attended 1968-72; Russ Orlando, class of 2005; Senghor Reid, class of 2005; and Gilda Snowden, class of 1977, 1979. Kresge Arts in Detroit, funded by the Kresge Foundation, provides grants of $25,000 each no strings attached, designed to assist visual artists to focus on making art. Through these winners, the Department is duly honored.

With sadness, we report the passing away of Rick Weyer, a graduate of the BFA program in Photography and an irreplaceable friend to many. He died in July just as he was closing the cash register at the place where he worked.

These accolades will be continued, with pleasure and pride, in the next issue of this Newsletter.