



Written by Doug Geyer · Photography provided by Art Academy of Cincinnati

ART



THEAT

MOVES



Like any organization that has withstood the test of time, the Art Academy of Cincinnati is not only thinking outside the box but has the courage to break it down, rethink and redesign it to stay relevant in an evolving world.

The AAC was founded nearly 150 years ago with a clear vision to make art that makes a difference. Although some people see art as optional, the AAC continues to consistently sculpt students who proclaim its essential power to not only move hearts and minds but companies and communities as well. Creating art that makes a difference and a living demands a rare mixture of bold leadership, passionate professors, committed donors and, of course, creative students.

The kind of creativity fostered at the AAC goes beyond classical and even cutting-edge technique and tools, past process and into the person. What draws so much attention and acclaim is how adept its students are at solving problems via seeing solutions. Art that flows from a critical and radical way of looking at the world. Though this is not typically what many expect from an art student, it's what a diverse and growing group of professionals and businesses have come to expect from the AAC family.

It's why the Art Academy hosted public relations professionals in August with Paige Williams, chair of the Studio Program, and associate dean Mark Thomas leading the workshop. Williams and Thomas are representative of a culture where "what if" and "how about if we turn that on its head" dovetail with how to hold a brush and what exposure makes a photo come to life.

Joan Kaup, vice president of Institutional Advancement, External Relations and Community Education, continues to marvel at how often people seek students for this very reason.

"Here we are in Over-the-Rhine and we are surrounded by all these startups," Kaup says. "An advisor to angel investors came because he wanted to talk about our students and our interns. I was thinking he needed a graphic designer or a web designer but he said, 'No, I need the thinker, the problem solver. You teach problem solving better than anyone in town.'"

Bold, groundbreaking moves are foundational in more ways than one. When the AAC moved to its current location in 2005, OTR was not the thriving incubator and innovative mecca that it is today. Many were hesitant to take their own step of faith into a community known more for crime than creativity.

"When our school moved here, it kept every light on in every window 24/7," says president John Sullivan. "We were a beacon of light for the entire neighborhood."

The school's presence was a catalyst that changed the conversation and inspired others to join in what has become not just a neighborhood renovation but also an economic and social restoration. Many students and alumni are hired by local businesses and others start them as well. Although AAC's lights aren't needed to brighten the night as they once were, the brilliance of its students and staff continues to shine both locally and nationally. AAC alumni have been hired by neighbors Kroger and Procter & Gamble, as well as distant admirers like Facebook and Google.

In addition to its intimate student body of 200 making a big impression, the AAC engages nearly 3,000 community members from

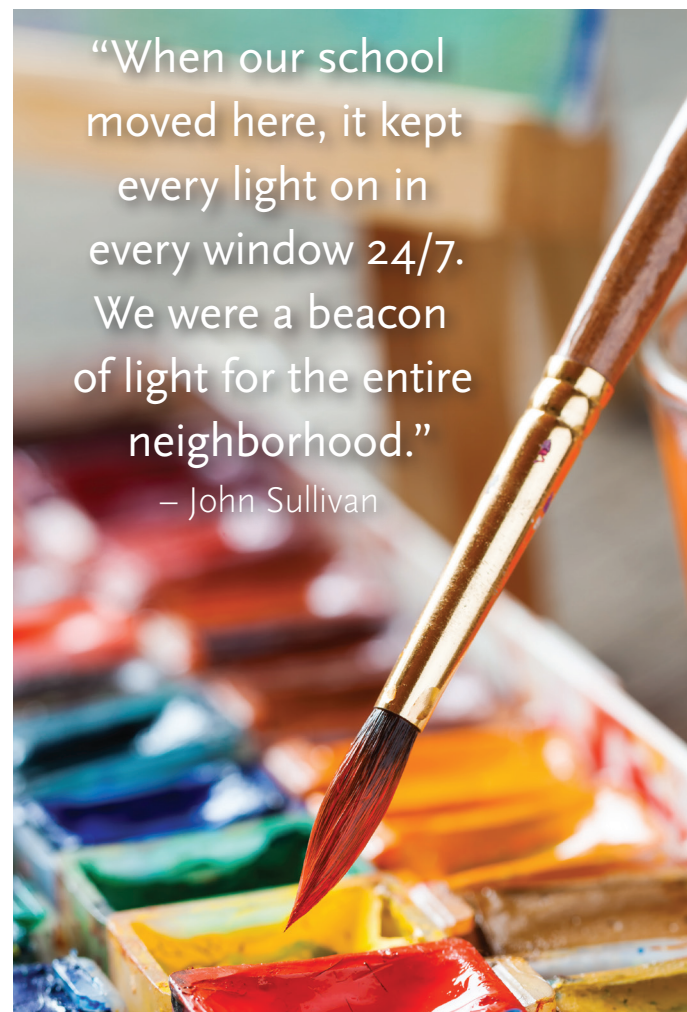
Greater Cincinnati through its Community Education programs that are designed to instruct and inspire young and old, insecure as well confident.

So if you need a box and are fortunate enough to attract and hire an AAC graduate, you'll get a brilliantly conceived and aesthetically thrilling one. But if a box is only what you thought you needed, you might very well get a balloon. Either way, you'll get a convention-challenging, market-grabbing, profit-boosting solution in the form of art. But hold on tight.

That box or balloon will flow from an artist who will make a difference.

And that's always a moving experience.

Art Academy of Cincinnati offers Bachelor of Fine Arts Degrees in Design, Painting and Drawing, Illustration, Painting, Photography, Print Media and Sculpture, Film/Video/Audio Minor, Art History Minor; and an Associate of Science Degree in Graphic Design. It also offers a Master of Arts in Art Education, which is taught during summer semesters. ❖



The Art Academy of Cincinnati is located at 1212 Jackson Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202. For more information, call 513.562.6262 or visit www.artacademy.edu.