

art@hendrix! 1959-2020

by Rebecca Jolley '21
Museum Associate in Curatorial Research
Windgate Museum of Art

Professor Don Marr joined the Art Department faculty in 1959 and was the sole full-time professor until 1967. Marr – a Renaissance man dressed in Aviator glasses, blue jeans, and a signature Stetson hat – was a gifted artist, calligrapher, and professor who worked hard to establish the Visual Arts as a central feature of Hendrix's liberal arts culture. For the faculty and student body, he was a great source of artistic knowledge and a welcoming guide into the world of art. And for his students, he was a tough yet tender mentor, one who helped them significantly develop both their artistic technique and their passion for the Visual Arts.

During Marr's 41-year career as the head of Hendrix's Art Department, his passion for painting complemented his zeal for teaching. He enjoyed challenging his students to move beyond provincial thinking and encouraged debate within his courses. In addition to teaching courses in free-hand drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, and calligraphy, Marr delivered compelling lectures on art history.

In 1967, **William "Bill" Hawes** accepted a position with Hendrix's Art Department, where he would teach for the next 20 years. Hawes, an alumnus of art programs at Wichita State University and the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, served as an approachable mentor for students, whose acute eye and knowledge of art history aided the development of their style and technique. He always encouraged the innovative and whimsical elements of student art, supporting the exploration of their broadest artistic interests.

Students loved learning from Hawes, whom they often called "Uncle Bill." At the 1987 senior banquet, students awarded him the coveted Students Award medal, presented annually to a Hendrix faculty member who was beloved by the student body.

Outside of his teaching responsibilities, Hawes continued working as a painter, ceramist, and prolific sculptor. His airboxes, playful wooden sculptures in the shape of a ziggurat, decorated the Hendrix campus, and many still reside in the college's Bailey Library.

In the fall of 1967, the same year Bill Hawes joined the Hendrix faculty, five Arkansas families each donated \$25,000 towards establishing the college's Fine Arts Fund. These donations significantly expanded the cultural events occurring on Hendrix's campus over the next 15 years, bringing Spanish dancer Jose Greco, The Hungarian State Symphony, and national art exhibitions to the college.

These events were often presented by Hendrix's Special Events Committee, a student-faculty committee lead by Marr. The group also brought prominent national figures to campus, including U.S. Attorney General Ramsay Clark in 1967 and Black comedian and civil rights activist Dick Gregory in 1969.

In contrast to these planned campus-wide events, one of the Art Department's most unique activities was entirely spontaneous. Early one morning, Marr was called to campus to meet with **Noah Webster Greenleaf**, a man claiming to be a model for both Picasso's

Saltimbanques and Arm & Hammer's detergent advertisements. Greenleaf requested an opportunity to speak with students in the Art Department about his experiences with Picasso, in return for overnight lodging and a bus ticket to the next college with an art department. Though Marr was initially skeptical of the visitor and his proposition, he ultimately allowed Greenleaf to speak on campus. His visit ended up being a massive success, and Greenleaf later became a frequent figure in Marr's paintings.

In the 1990s, **Dr. Ann Die**, Hendrix's 9th president, noticed that art pieces on campus were not clearly organized and had no documentation or signage. To fix this, she asked **Professor Danny Grace** - whom she called "The Art Czar" - to document and catalog the college's permanent collection, and to hang each work of art not currently on display. Grace, with the help of staff-member **Ann Turney**, retrieved the title of each piece and identified its artist, placing the information onto corresponding brass plaques, intended for display alongside each work.

President Die also put together an Art Acquisition Committee, who used the newly established Fine Arts Fund to purchase a few pieces of art each year. The Committee most frequently purchased works from alumni or from senior art shows, though many acquisitions came from on-campus exhibitions by groups like the Mid-Southern Watercolorists. Marr was extensively involved in acquiring pieces for the college upon the augmentation of this budget.

In 1975, Marr's earned designation as a full professor, and in 1991, he was named the Louis and Charlotte Cabe Distinguished Professor of Art. He achieved Senior Emeritus status in 1999 before retiring in 2000. Upon Marr's retirement, President Die asked Danny Grace to help put together the Don Marr Collection in his honor. Grace reached out to alumni who were students of Marr's, asking if they wanted to donate a piece to the collection. Grace was met with an overwhelmingly positive response.

In 1998, shortly before Marr retired, the Art Department expanded, hiring **Erik Maakestad** and **Dr. Rod Miller**. Maakestad, an alumnus of Central Washington University and the University of Illinois Urbana, primarily taught courses on three-dimensional art, including sculpture and ceramics. Miller - who holds graduate degrees in Art, Art History, and Architectural History from Stephen F. Austin State University, the University of Iowa, and the University of Louisville, respectively - joined the faculty through a private grant, designed to hire the college's first PhD Art Historian.

In 2000, the year Marr retired, painter **Matthew Lopas** accepted a position with the department. Lopas, a graduate of the Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University's art programs, took over painting and drawing courses at Hendrix. He continues to teach courses in these media, including Digital Drawing and the History of Materials and Techniques of Painting.

With the hiring of photographer **Maxine Payne** in 2002, Hendrix's Art Department attained the largest number of full-time Art faculty in the college's history. Payne - an Arkansas-native and alumnus of the University of Central Arkansas and University of Iowa's photography programs - transformed Hendrix's photography program from an occasional course subject with limited resources to a central tenant of Hendrix's Art program. Previously, photography courses were taught by adjunct professors like **Paul Faris, Hugh Harris, and Frank Roland**.

In 2003, Hendrix opened a new \$3 million art facility, funded by the Windgate Foundation. The 19,000 square foot complex houses three separate buildings, each dedicated to different artistic media. Building A houses faculty offices, an art history lecture space, and a complete photography studio with an adjoining darkroom. The college's darkroom was previously housed in Staples, buried so deeply that students had to know exactly where it was to successfully find it. It was then placed into the basement of Trieschmann, where costumes for the theater department are currently stored. Now, the darkroom is accessible for Hendrix students of all majors and is one of the only wet darkrooms in the state of Arkansas.

Building B provides space for drawing, painting, and printmaking courses, and has interior display space built into its center. Building C is dedicated to three-dimensional work, with a ceramics studio, sculpture studio, wood shop, furnishing room, and bronze casting foundry. The building also features space for welding, kilns, and clay mixers.

The department expanded further in 2008, hiring printmaker **Melissa Gill** as a full-time instructor. Gill – who holds degrees in Printmaking and Drawing from Purdue University and Indiana University-Bloomington – soon began teaching Beginning Drawing and Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Printmaking courses.

After Marr's passing in 2013, his children established the Don and Camilla Marr Scholarship, designed to honor their parents' memory by providing financial support to Hendrix's junior and senior Studio Art majors. The family funded the scholarship through a donation drive and by selling around 38 of Marr's remaining unsold works.

Distinguished alumnus **Dan Rizzie** donated a painting to Hendrix's permanent art collection in honor of Don Marr and Camilla Raymond Marr. The work – titled *Trieschmann Revisited* – was unveiled in the college's Bailey Library during August of 2014. Rizzie also donated 25 limited edition prints of the painting to Marr's family, which were presented as a gift to donors.

In spring 2015, Hendrix students **Hanna Gallegos** and **Grace Oxley** became the first recipients of this scholarship, which continues to remind students of all that the Marrs did for Hendrix's Art Department. More recent recipients include **Chantal Danyluk** and **Katie Bell**, whose work appears in the *art@hendrix!* exhibition. Current senior **Arthur Trickett-Wile** is the fund's most recent awardee.

Currently, the Hendrix College Art Department specializes in painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, three-dimensional art, and art history. In recent years, the department has hosted a variety of visiting artists and lectures, including photographer Patty Carroll and Arkansas artist Kat Wilson. In 2018, artist Sue Wrbican delivered a lecture on selected work from 2011 to 2017, and architectural historian William Morgan spoke on the work of Eero Saarinen and the St. Louis Arch.

The most recent addition to Hendrix's Art program is the Windgate Museum of Art, an 8,000 square foot facility funded by the Windgate Charitable Foundation and the Alice L. Walton Foundation. The museum, which features four exhibition galleries and a Lobby Gallery, has a vision to be the premier teaching museum in Arkansas, providing students with hands-on experience in fields like curatorial research, collection management, and educational programming.

In the spring of 2020, the Windgate Museum of Art began hosting visiting artists like muralist and social activist Dave Loewenstein, who delivered a public lecture entitled “This is Not a Test” and spoke to Arts and Politics courses about art’s function as a form of political advocacy. In February 2020, the museum sponsored a visit by Arkansas silverpoint artist Marjorie Williams Smith, who delivered a public lecture titled “The Resurgence of Silverpoint—A Contemporary Approach.” Smith also led a student silverpoint workshop and attended a private lunch with members of Students for Black Culture.

Fall 2020 marked the opening of Hendrix’s new Windgate Museum of Art. The museum’s first public exhibition, *Let Us March On*, documents the Black Lives Matter movement in Arkansas and hangs in the museum’s Window Gallery, where it can be seen from the museum’s exterior.

The Windgate Museum of Art’s inaugural exhibition, *art@hendrix!*, explores the rich and diverse history of the visual arts at Hendrix College, presenting work created by faculty and alumni as early as 1938 and as recently as 2020. The exhibition – which is published online and in a fully illustrated accompanying catalogue – presents nearly 100 works drawn from the collections of alumni and faculty, the college’s permanent collection, and the Historical Arkansas Museum. Virtual programming, including curator talks, film screenings, panel discussions, and artist demonstrations, further highlights Hendrix’s dedication to the arts, in addition to the meaningful contributions that its alumni, faculty, and staff make within their local artistic communities.