

*Training prepares you for a job; an education prepares you for life.*

— From *Art and Fear*,  
by David Bayles and Ted Orlando

# AN ACADEMIC ATTITUDE ABOUT ART

By Nancy Bronner

*What good teachers offer their students is something akin to the vulnerability found in a personal relationship -- a kind of artistic and intellectual intimacy that lets others see how they reached a specific point, not simply that they did reach it. It is that willingness to lay open the line that runs between their life and their art that gives meaning to technique, and empowerment to artistic goals that for the student may still lie many years distant. Learning is the natural reward of meetings with remarkable ideas, and remarkable people.*

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Wyman Rice displayed a new glaze called "Bleeding Heart" on an elliptically-shaped vessel.



Life is an ongoing education, where learning may take place when least expected. But the opportunity to be part of a college-level critique doesn't often occur at rural arts festivals. An exception to the rule recently took place at the inaugural ArtsFestival at Blue Licks Battlefield State Park. The first-time-ever fair, coordinated by Croft Foundation director Robert Barker, was an effort to bring a high-quality art and craft show to a rural area that had never had such an event.

Jurors Arturo Alonzo Sandoval, a University of Kentucky art professor, and Transylvania University art professor Dan Selter, were ostensibly in attendance to select purchase and merit awards. But, as they proceeded from booth to booth, they began to thoughtfully and graciously share their evaluation process with the individual artists.

"I'd never juried a show that way before," Selter said later, "but the size and nature of the group offered an unusual opportunity." The grassy field became an academic studio, and

the fortunate artists and craftspeople received supportive yet astute, multifaceted academic critiques from two nationally and internationally recognized artists.

The critique is a staple of the studio art class. Painter Willie Robertson, a 1999 bachelor of fine arts graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and ArtsFestival participant, said that the critiques he experienced during his formal education were frequently harsh but always thought-provoking. "I was taught by painters who had a background I respected. They made it so difficult; they did everything they could to make you quit. But I wanted to develop the kind of internal discipline that would make me a good artist. Participating in critiques is a big part of that process."



Sandoval (center) and Selter (right) give Willie Robertson (left) some valuable suggestions during this impromptu critique.

Ceramist Wyman Rice, who has been making a living with his work for many years, demands the highest craftsmanship from himself. Rice never completed a degree, but he returned to university classes in art as often as he could. "I would not have discovered my medium of choice without attending college, where you have an opportunity to experiment with many media.

It wasn't until my second time taking college courses, when I would race to the University of Louisville



Limestone gargoyle sculpture  
by Robert Barker.

studios after work, that I put my hands into the clay and found my personal means of expression.”

Olivia Hind, daughter of Sunflower Sundries’ Jennifer Gleason, is a sophomore at Mason County High School. She is taking advanced-placement art classes at the recommendation of her

advantages of an academic education: “College provides a creative environment unlike any other. State and private institutions offer many areas of study in both fine and craft arts, which opens up diverse avenues for content and context, materials and process, and competitive career development. It also provides faculty and peer evaluation and support. A degree offers the highest credibility.”

Serendipitous arts festival critiques aside, a college program coordinates the acquisition of indispensable life and career skills, including real-world business skills training, into a manageable

skills provided by an arts education, the arts bring variety and richness to our lives in immeasurable ways. Lifelong students of the arts interact with their communities as volunteers, organizers, audience members and patrons. Whether you are an artist or an art lover, it’s never too late to begin your formal education. 🎨



One of Robertson’s recent landscapes in oil depicts a familiar Kentucky scene.

art teacher and is already thinking of college. “It’s not too early. I’m collecting my work and preparing a portfolio so that I’ll be able to apply for scholarships. I know I want to have a career as an artist, and that isn’t easy. College will give me the chance to get a lot of feedback and prepare for the real world.”

Sandoval succinctly sums up the

package. Social scientists tell us that we will change careers more than once in our lives, so preparation as a well-rounded person with a strong sense of style and balance and well-honed assessment and problem-solving skills is indispensable, regardless of career choice. And, in addition to the practical survival



Olivia Hind, a serious art student at Mason County High School, and her self-portrait in pencil.



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