



Helping people live creative lives

Fact Sheet

Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Penland operates year-round providing opportunity to study in one-, two-, and eight-week workshops in fifteen professional teaching studios. Penland programs also include artists' residencies, an educational outreach program, archives, winter studio independent study, and the Penland Gallery and Visitors Center.

Mission

The mission of Penland School of Crafts is to support individual and artistic growth in crafts. Penland enriches the lives of individuals by teaching skills, ideas, and the value of craft. Everyone is welcome, from avocational and vocational craft practitioners to the general public. Penland is a beautiful, stimulating, transformative, and egalitarian place where people love to work, feel free to experiment, and often exceed their own expectations. Penland's programs encompass traditional and contemporary craft, firmly acknowledging the human spirit expressed throughout the world in craft.

History

When founder Lucy Morgan established the Penland School of Crafts in 1929, she sought two things: to revive a tradition of craftsmanship vanishing in the wake of the industrial revolution and to help local residents supplement their incomes through craft production. In 1923, she formed the Penland Weavers which provided looms and materials to local women and marketed their handwoven goods. She invited guest instructors to teach weaving, and when requests for instruction began to come from other parts of the country, Penland School was born. Penland's second director, Bill Brown, expanded the school with the addition of new studios, a resident artist program, and the work-study scholarship program. The Penland Archive includes 175 cubic feet of paper and photographic records as well as many artifacts and objects that define the important role that North Carolina has played in the American contemporary crafts movement. The campus is part of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area, and was added to the National Register of Historic Place as the Penland School Historic District in 2003.

Programs

Today Penland holds classes in books and paper, clay, drawing, glass, iron, metals, photography, printmaking, letterpress, textiles, and wood. Summer sessions are one-, two-, or two-and-a-half weeks long. Eight-week Concentration sessions, as well as one week short courses, take place in the spring and fall. College credit can be obtained for Penland classes through Western Carolina University. Each year, over 120 instructors from across the United States and occasionally other countries teach at Penland. Instructors are practicing studio artists and craftspeople and in many cases are also professors from MFA-granting university programs. Penland also provides community programs such as the Community Open House, Kids Camp, the Teaching Artist Initiative in partnership with Mitchell County schools and Mayland Community College.

Penland Gallery and Visitors Center

Penland serves the general public through its gallery and visitors center. The gallery staff provides about 14,000 visitors each year with information about the school and its programs, the resident artists, and other artists whose work is displayed and sold in the gallery. The gallery educates the public about contemporary craft, provides twice-weekly tours of the campus, and directs visitors to area studios that are open to the public. The gallery includes work by more than 250 artists affiliated with Penland School of Crafts. In addition to the general sales area, the gallery hosts four invitational exhibitions each year along with nine exhibitions of work by artists currently teaching at the school. Gallery receptions and talks are open to the general public; the gallery maintains a mailing list for invitations to these events. Gallery hours are as follows: March–December: Tuesday–Saturday, 10 – 5; Sundays 12 – 5; closed Mondays. January–February: closed.

Students

Penland welcomes serious students (age 19 and over) with all levels of experience from professionals to absolute beginners. The school can accommodate 175 students per summer session and 100 in the spring and fall. Scholarships are available for all of Penland's classes. Each year, about 1200 students come to Penland from across the country and around the world.

Core Fellowship Program

Penland's core student fellowship program, unique in the United States, integrates nine students into every aspect of the school during their two-year stay. Core students work twenty-five hours a week and receive room, board, and tuition. The program gives them access to over 120 instructors in fourteen studios during the course of a year. Core students play a vital role in the operation of the school and serve as ambassadors to students, instructors, and visitors.

Resident Artist Program

Penland provides living and working space at a modest cost to seven resident artists for a period of three years each. These full-time, self-supporting artists are selected through a staff and community review process. Residents may work in book arts, clay, glass, iron, metals, photography, textiles, wood, or mixed media. Coming to Penland at some transitional point in their careers, artists may use the resident program for artistic growth, to gain professional recognition, or as a step towards establishing a studio career.

Supply Store

Penland's supply store provides instructors, students, and community members with a broad array of materials and tools for their work. People can purchase items ranging from handmade paper and acid-free adhesives to jewelry findings and colored glass rods. The store sells books about craft processes, Penland T-shirts, and other logo items like aprons, tote bags, and post-cards, as well as film, batteries, sodas, and snacks.

Governance and Staff

Penland School of Crafts is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit institution. A national, volunteer board of thirty trustees guides the organization in support of its mission, is responsible for the fiscal health of the school, and hires the director. The director is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school. Penland employs sixty-two full- and part-time year-round staff and seasonal staff.

Financial Information

Penland's annual operating budget is 3.9 million dollars. Student tuition, room, board, and fees cover 43 percent of Penland's operating expenses. The balance is paid for through a combination of earned income, donations, and investment income. Penland receives funds from the North Carolina Arts Council, private foundations, corporations, and individuals. One-third of the student body attends Penland with financial assistance provided by the school's scholarship program.

Economic Impact

McColl School of Business at Queens College of Charlotte conducted an economic impact study for Penland School in the fall of 2000. The study concluded that the school's annual economic contribution to the local community is between six and eight million dollars annually. The school's total annual contribution to the economy of western North Carolina is estimated to be more than forty million dollars. The study reviewed employment, retail craft sales, and the spending by students and instructors. The impact of student expenditures in the county per year totals \$315,000. The impact of Penland visitors to the county per year is estimated to be \$646,000.

Location

Penland is located in Mitchell County, North Carolina, fifty-three miles northeast of Asheville and six miles from Spruce Pine, the nearest town. Penland Road can be reached from either US 19E or NC 226. The nearest public transportation (plane or bus) is in Asheville.

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