



Helping people live creative lives

Penland School of Crafts Overview

Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education located in the mountains of North Carolina. Penland's mission is to support individual and artistic growth through craft. Penland offers one-, two-, and eight-week adult workshops in books and paper, clay, drawing and painting, glass, iron, metals, photography, printmaking and letterpress, textiles, and wood. The school also sponsors artists' residencies, a community education program, and a craft gallery representing artists affiliated with the school.

Penland School was founded by Lucy Morgan, a teacher at an Episcopalian school that once occupied several buildings which are still part of Penland. In 1923, she organized the Penland Weavers, to provide looms, materials, and instruction to local women and market their handwoven goods. She invited noted weaving expert Edward F. Worst to teach, and when request for instruction came from other parts of the country, Penland School was born. Soon after the first students arrived in 1929, other crafts were added, and the school began to raise funds, acquire property, and construct buildings.

When Lucy Morgan retired in 1962, she was succeeded by Bill Brown. During Brown's 21-year tenure, new media, such as iron and glass, were added to the program and the school began offering eight-week sessions in the spring and fall. Brown also started the resident artist program, which provides low-cost housing and studios to craft artists who work at Penland for several years, and he began a work-study scholarship program to make Penland accessible to a broader range of students.

Today the school encompasses 49 buildings located on 400 acres of land. Each year approximately 1200 people come to Penland for instruction and another 14,000 pass through as visitors. Penland has no standing faculty; its instructors include full-time studio artists as well as teachers from colleges and universities. Students live at Penland and take only one class at a time allowing them to learn by total immersion—the ideas and information gained in a two-week session might take a year to absorb and process.

The school has also become the focal point for a lively community of craft artists, thanks in part to the resident program which has encouraged many artists to settle in the area. The presence of so many nearby studios greatly enhances the quality of the student experience.

Students come from all walks of life. They range from 19 to 90 years of age and from absolute beginners to professional craftspeople. Some see Penland as a productive retreat, some as a source of inspiration for their personal creative lives, and others as a place to exchange vital information about material, technique, and process. What brings them all together is a love of materials and making, and the often transformative experience of working with intensity and focus in a supportive community atmosphere.

Penland School began out of a strong belief in a few simple values. Lucy Morgan summarized these as "the joy of creative occupation and a certain togetherness—working with one another in creating the good and the beautiful." For more than seventy-five years, these principles have guided a remarkable institution which has had a pervasive influence on American craft and touched the lives of thousands of individuals.

For more information about Penland School of Crafts, call 828-765-2359 or visit www.penland.org.