

insiderisd



student leaders take charge

The Tap Room at the top of Memorial Hall is a colorful place during a meeting of the RISD Student Alliance (SA). One student seated in the large ring of chairs has a shock of bright pink hair; another sprawls on a giant green beanbag; jeans and fingernails bear evidence of recent work with paint and charcoal. Despite the laid-back appearance of the group, though, it's clear from the conversation among the 40-some attendees that the Alliance takes its mission seriously. As Suzannah Park '05 FD, newly elected president of the group, announces each agenda item—updates on department policies, strategies for an upcoming meeting with the Board of Trustees—student representatives from the academic departments and various campus groups give brief reports. Then action is proposed, voted on and confirmed.

Given the significant responsibilities of the SA and the diversity of interests it speaks for, this level of efficiency is essential. The SA is the official voice of the student body and a vital link to the faculty and administrative branches of the college. Reflecting on her motivation to become active in the group, Suzannah explains that “RISD is a small enough school that I started hearing the same issues being discussed by students”—and she realized that her natural capacity for organization and communication could get those issues heard by RISD's official decision-makers.

Optimism and enthusiasm are palpable at a gathering of the Student Alliance, as is the phenomenal amount of energy for involvement beyond the studio. The SA incorporates all the student-run clubs and athletic groups on campus, and the roster paints a vivid picture of diversity: the Latin Alliance, basketball and volleyball teams, the Asian Cultural Association, magazines, RISD Global. Talking about her experience at RISD so far, Suzannah seems to embody that variety herself: “My ultimate goal is not to do one artistic thing, but many. RISD is preparing me for anything—to do lots of things.”

[center] Saturday, June 5 was a banner day for the 625 undergraduate and graduate candidates receiving their RISD diplomas at Commencement ceremonies by the river. As roughly 3,000 guests looked on with pride and amusement, the Class of 2004 paraded by in a colorful stream of costumery, carrying on a decades-old RISD tradition of visual spectacle. Among the many special awards given that day, honorary degrees went to photographer Nathan Lyons, longtime RISD trustee Estise Mauran and illustrator David Macaulay '69 AR, who also delivered a powerful Commencement address about America's current “crusade” abroad and the importance of fighting fear and complacency at home.



parents' council returns to campus

Members of the RISD Parents' Council kicked off their May meeting at a reception in the RISD Library to honor Trustee John McCrillis '39 GD, whose life's work in calligraphy and graphic design was on exhibit there. On Saturday, May 8, the meeting itself began with lunch and presentations by John Terry, dean of Fine Arts, and Dawn Barrett, dean of Architecture + Design, on initiatives underway in RISD's two largest divisions.

Highlights from committee reports that followed include:

- an update from Margaret Dawson, head of the Student Life Support Committee, on ideas for helping the Office of Student Life (OSL) assist students with extracurricular interests (athletics, music, theater, etc.)
- information from Marty Cohn, head of the Parent Communications Committee, about the new parent web page (<http://intranet.risd.edu/parents>) and the new design of this semiannual newsletter
- encouragement from Laurie Volk to continue supporting the College Annual Fund, which has seen a 94 percent increase in parent giving in the last four years (to \$242,000 last year)

After the committee reports, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs Jay Coogan spoke about The Future by Design capital campaign and presented a virtual tour of the interior of The Chace Center, the new facility designed by Spanish architect Jose Rafael Moneo.

Before the meeting concluded, Parents' Council Co-Chairs Todd Zimmerman and Laurie Volk announced the end of their term and introduced Richard and Catherine Haining (parents of Richard '06 FD), who will assume this role beginning July 1. Todd and Laurie (parents of Brian '99 PT and Kit '04 PT) have been involved with RISD for the past nine years, and through their contributions of time, energy, ideas and financial support have set a higher standard for parent volunteers of the future. Although their second son graduated in June, they intend to establish a branch of the Council specifically for parents of graduates.

For more information about the meeting, go to <http://intranet.risd.edu/parents>. To join the RISD Parents' Council, please contact Cameron Jones, director of Special Gifts and liaison to the Council, at cjones@risd.edu or 401 454-6790.

council members sit in on crit

To give parents a sense of what their sons and daughters are experiencing at RISD, Council meetings often include an art or design workshop. At this spring's gathering, members had the opportunity to visit a textile design studio taught by Assistant Professor Liz Collins '91 TX/MFA '99 (www.lizcollins.com). A textile designer who lives and works in New York City, Collins has attracted much media attention for using innovative techniques to create revolutionary apparel from her woven fabrics.

For parents, Collins demonstrated how to use a knitting machine and invited them to participate in a critique examining each student's project in terms of form, color and composition. In addition to the introduction to Textiles, members of the Council have participated in faculty-led sessions in life drawing, figure modeling and computer animation.

parents profiled: crosses value ongoing connection

Elizabeth Cross '04 PT is not the only one in the family reaping the benefits of a RISD education; her parents, Melanie and Peter, feel they, too, have been enormously enriched by opportunities made available to them during their daughter's years at RISD. They have seen Lizzy blossom at what has turned out to be the "ideal school for her" and have found a stimulating new community in the RISD Parents' Council. As residents of Palo Alto, CA, they have attended various RISD-sponsored gatherings in the San Francisco Bay area and have enjoyed "the experience of a lifetime" at RISD/Roma, a gala event in 2003 celebrating the college's 125th anniversary.

A former ceramist, Melanie believes the school's strong reputation, excellent facilities and manageable scale made RISD the perfect place for her daughter to go away to college. "The school is connected to the city but not lost in it," she says. Melanie also appreciates the way a RISD education fosters "creativity and independence of thought, teaching students to become problem solvers."

Peter agrees: "It's interesting that although Lizzy and I have opposite orientations"—he earned his degrees in engineering and computer science from California Institute of Technology and UC Berkeley, and is a communications technology consultant—"she nevertheless says the same thing about RISD that I do about my alma mater, that my education helped me learn how to think."

Lizzy has had a longstanding interest in painting, and she has such a natural instinct for color that her parents have relied on her for decorating advice since she was five years old. "She was always right on the mark," recalls Peter. Since arriving at RISD, however, Lizzy has also had the opportunity to become very involved in student government, an inclination that has led to meetings with trustees and college President Roger Mandle. "She seems to be coming out of RISD with dual interests in painting and politics," Melanie observes.

The family's appreciation for all that the college has to offer was a factor in their decision to support RISD with a \$50,000 unrestricted gift to The Future by Design capital campaign, in addition to their regular contributions to the College Annual Fund. "We decided to make it unrestricted," says Peter, "but we have talked to Roger [Mandle] about what we think is important. We see the gift as supporting the new Chace Center, as well as the Painting Department."

Before making this generous gesture, the Crosses consulted their daughter, who envisions the new center enriching student life by providing a central gathering place, a café and more student exhibition space. Lizzy has now graduated, but her parents intend to maintain their connections to RISD and have offered to continue hosting RISD events on the West Coast.

RISD fosters "creativity and independence of thought, teaching students to become problem solvers."

—Melanie Cross



[above] Parents Peter and Melanie Cross, shown here with daughters Carolyn and Elizabeth '04 PT, share Lizzy's enthusiasm for RISD and all it has to offer.

[facing page, second from top] Laurie Volk and Todd Zimmerman, outgoing co-chairs of the Parents' Council, plan to stay involved with RISD as parents of two graduates.

[facing page, bottom] Assistant Professor of Textiles Liz Collins '91 TX/MFA '99 introduced parents to the intricacies of a knitting machine at the May meeting of the Parents' Council.



rents in focus

IN ARCHITECTURE building opportunity

Students and faculty in RISD's Architecture Department have designed a master plan for the campus of the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Scheduled to open in 2006, the new institution (www.asian-university.org) will be geared toward educating some 2,500 rural and underprivileged women from throughout Asia in economic and community development, management, environmental engineering and sustainability, information technology and other fields relevant to the region.

Led by Professor of Landscape Architecture Elizabeth Dean Hermann, a consultant for AUW, and Professor of Landscape Architecture/Architecture Derek Bradford, students have been working on the campus design since the start of Wintersession. Although they had been scheduled to visit the site in Bangladesh in January, the trip had to be cancelled due to a travel advisory for the region. Instead, students in the studio have worked closely with an advisory group of Bangladeshi nationals and Asian sociologists, architects and ecologists, as well as members of the AUW Support Foundation in New York. All parties involved have engaged in in-depth and sustained dialogue about cultural, religious, gender, pedagogical, social and planning issues. A parallel graduate studio took place at MIT this spring; work from both efforts will soon be presented to the AUW Support Foundation for review.

"This has been an amazing opportunity for our students to work on a project with enormous social implications," says Hermann. "Although women throughout South and Southeast Asia have been denied education at great expense to themselves and the region's economic vitality, our students are learning how to address these very complex social issues through design."



NOAH DAVID SMITH MFA '04 PH



IN PAINTING still a classic

The RISD Museum celebrated one of the most enduring and timeless artistic genres this spring in *Better Still: Looking at Still Life in the Museum's Collection*. Bringing together painting and sculpture from the 17th through the 21st centuries and featuring artists including Matisse, Cézanne, Georgia O'Keefe and RISD Painting Professor Dennis Congdon '75 PT, the show suggested the scope of the tradition and examined its history through changing cultural contexts.

As the result of a collaboration between museum curators and faculty in the Painting Department, *Better Still* dovetailed neatly with the studio course *The Painted Object* led by Associate Professor and Dean of Graduate Studies Donna Bruton. In addition to looking closely at the history of the genre, the course guided students through still life composition with the aid of decorative objects, Asian fans, furniture and other items in the Museum's collection — while giving them the unique opportunity to bring paints and easels into the galleries in order to study and paint on site. "The experience of actually painting in the galleries contradicts everything students know about today's museum etiquette," Bruton said, noting that artists in the past were welcome to copy paintings in grand museums like the Louvre. "This collaboration allows us to revisit that tradition and enhance the classroom experience."



A restaurant prototype created by 29 RISD students in Furniture Design, Digital Media and Graphic Design made quite a splash at this spring's *Salone Internazionale del Mobile* (International Furniture Fair) in Milan, Italy. Imagined as a wine bar in New York City's TriBeCa neighborhood, the model included live interactive décor — video murals shot from beneath translucent tabletops and projected onto a wall.



the cre

IN INDUSTRIAL DESIGN + DIGITAL MEDIA sketching with silicon

Industrial Design students learn an essential principle early on: coming up with the best design solution requires lots of experimenting with materials. Straightforward enough when the medium is an easily obtainable one like wood or plastic or fabric — but what if your materials are digital components and electronic parts? Matt Cottam BID '00, cofounder of the Providence interaction design firm Tellart



MATT COTTAM BID '00

Students are designing better products because “they understand their media at a deeper, more detailed level.”

—Matt Cottam BID '00

(www.tellart.com) and a RISD instructor, explains that designers working in the realm of human-computer interaction (HCI) are “relatively impoverished”: the cost of raw materials and the amount of training required to use them confidently can “hamper designers’ efforts to make products sensitive to human use.”

Cottam and Tellart cofounder Nick Scappaticci '00 ID resolved to tackle this dilemma in a RISD course first offered in 2001. By teaching students how to dismantle and then build with recycled electronic materials — discarded keyboards, game controllers, mice — the team hoped to humanize the HCI field while opening it up to the free investigation and “sketching” that facilitate good design. The course itself was experimental; several versions later, it’s offered to undergraduates in Industrial Design as *HCI Studio*, and in a modified format to grad students in Digital Media as *The Experimental Physical Interface*.

Aided by software custom-made by Tellart, student designers link digital and analog (electrical/physical) input and output in wonderfully inventive machines — demonstrating through their projects that unfamiliar technology doesn’t have to be a barrier to innovation.

One student conceived of a computer “mouse pad” for the visually impaired that uses raised pins to convey on-screen information. Another worked on a virtual mirror that superimposes a chosen garment onto the user’s reflected image. In the graduate course, where students respond to the classic ID challenge of designing for an extreme environment, projects have included an audio/visual medical guide for a village in India plagued with rampant health problems and low literacy.

Though the instructors will continue to tinker with the course curriculum each time it’s offered, Cottam is confident in reporting good results so far. He observes that students are designing better products because “they understand their media at a deeper, more detailed level.” Design may require a different kind of creativity than programming and engineering, he points out, but since the disciplines are united in everyday products, it’s important for the experts at all stages in the development process to understand each other. By building a “vocabulary that bridge[s] the gap between designers and computer engineers,” his students are well equipped to understand and address human needs.

Collection '04, the spring runway show of student work in Apparel Design, included a spiral-cut silk dress by Kassie McDonald '04 AP, a silk jersey top by Lindsey Hunt '04 AP and a crepe coat and hand-beaded halter by Rachel Koestenblatt '04 AP.



ative process



“We were all ready for something different — to be pushed.”

—Becky Fong



student voice: finding a balance

BY BECKY FONG '05 GD

My high school teachers always encouraged my ability in art, but it wasn't until I was a sophomore that I started thinking that maybe I could do something with it. I had always been very involved with student government and planning activities, and I'm a real people-person, so I had been thinking I might study in Washington, DC, and go into international relations. But then I started focusing on my art more and had a great senior art teacher who was really encouraging. That year RISD became my real dream; I knew if I got in I'd go—even though the thought of six-hour studios was kind of overwhelming.

When I got to RISD I noticed right away that there was a difference in thinking between the students here and the ones at my high school. We were all ready for something different—to be pushed. In Foundation Studies faculty really do push you, but in a positive way. I got exposed to things I didn't know about; I had a hard time choosing my major (graphic design) because I was also leaning towards textiles or glass.

There's a great support network here, especially for taking risks. And living in the Quad, you're all in the same boat. Everyone is working hard—as hard as they possibly can—but it's really enjoyable. We work hard and we play hard. You need that balance to make it work.

I want to get everything I can out of RISD, but I've had to learn to listen to my own needs, know my priorities and manage my time. I was a Resident Assistant this year, which was great, and I'm vice president of the Student Alliance. This year I organized Bridging the Gap, a series of hip-hop showdowns with rappers, dancers and musicians from RISD and Brown. I also got a grant through the Community Learning Fund to do a project in the community with artist's books. But I realize I

[\[top\]](#) [Becky Fong '05 GD sketches in the Nature Lab, a rich source of information and inspiration for students in all disciplines. The Nature Lab recently received an extraordinary gift: the Arthur L. Loeb Design Science Teaching Collection, donated by the Harvard professor's widow. This fascinating collection of three-dimensional geometric models and two-dimensional pattern studies reveals the basic building blocks of the natural world and is now available as a new resource for students.](#)

can't do everything, so I have to prioritize. Work comes first, but mental and physical health is important, too.

Because of the friends and support I've found here, I've gained a lot of confidence about my future abilities. I feel like I've found a new home. Once you're here—living it, breathing it—you discover that the rewards are endless.

campus comm

st. florian designs a national landmark

Over Memorial Day weekend, roughly 800,000 people converged on the Mall in Washington, DC, for a long-awaited dedication — of the National World War II Memorial (www.wwiimemorial.com) designed by RISD Architecture Professor Friedrich St. Florian. It had been eight years since his proposal for the memorial was chosen from more than 400 in a national design competition.

Controversy over building on the 7.4-acre site dragged on for so long that only 25 percent of the original 16 million veterans of WWII are still alive to see the completed memorial. Situated between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument — interrupting a vista considered inviolable — it proved to be “an impossible site,” St. Florian says. “Essentially, you were given a site on which you could not build.”

But architects and designers are problem-solvers at heart. So St. Florian lowered the memorial almost six feet below street level. He used the existing Rainbow Pool as the central unifying element of the plan, transforming it into a fountain so that “water is really the animating principle of the whole design.” And he flanked the pool with granite pillars symbolizing the 56 states and territories that stood together to fight, but spaced them apart and grouped them into two separate arcs to avoid obstructing sightlines.

A measured man who was 12 when Allied troops freed his Austrian village from German occupation, St. Florian also designed the memorial with a clear eye for its classical setting. “I think the World War II Memorial firmly stands its ground between the two great building icons,” he told reporters this spring. “But it also harnesses the emotional power of the Lincoln and Washington memorials.” In the end, despite the many hurdles, the professor acknowledges his sense of satisfaction: “I honestly think it came out pretty well,” he says. “I think people will be pleasantly surprised.”

career assists

As recent and soon-to-be graduates of RISD, students face important questions about getting started along their career paths. A mentoring program coordinated by the RISD Alumni Association takes some of the mystery out of the process by matching young alumni and upperclass students with older, more established alumni in their professional and/or geographic areas. Through conversations on the phone, over lunch or by e-mail, emerging artists and designers can take advantage of their counterparts' experience and advice in areas such as:

- local resources and organizations
- portfolio and resume development
- professional and RISD contacts in the area

Requesting a mentor is a simple process, and a match is usually made within a few weeks. Please encourage your son or daughter (sophomore or beyond) to learn more about this valuable benefit by contacting Nancy Crasco '64 AE at ncrasco@rcn.com or 617 254-1952 (Massachusetts). You can also find a brochure in pdf format at intranet.risd.edu/departments/alumni.asp.



DON RIPPER/LATOFF INC.

[above] Architecture Professor Friedrich St. Florian joined a crowd of veterans, dignitaries, celebrities and other enthusiasts for the dedication of the National World War II Memorial he designed on the Mall in Washington, DC.





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RISD BY DESIGN 2004 | OCTOBER 8-10 alumni reunion + parents' weekend

Plan ahead for the annual weekend for parents and alumni—three days of informative programs, festive gatherings and opportunities to connect with RISD and fellow parents. Visit www.risd.edu/alumni_risd_by_design.cfm for information on events and planning your stay in Providence.

OF INTEREST ON THE WEB

*for information on current projects + initiatives
at RISD: www.risd.edu/projects.cfm*

*for current internships and job listings
open to students and alumni:*

www.risd.edu/artworks_select.cfm

*to find out more about RISD's remarkable
students, faculty and alumni:*

www.risd.edu/about_profiles.cfm

*to browse through nearly 1500 photos of
student, faculty and alumni artwork:*

www.risd.edu/gallery.cfm

for a calendar of events on campus:

www.risd.edu/academic_calendar.cfm

KEY DATES | FALL 2004

september

11 RISD housing opens

11-14 new student orientation

15 fall semester classes begin

october

8-10 RISD by Design weekend

11 Columbus Day; classes held

november

11 Veterans Day; classes held

24-28 Thanksgiving recess

december

10 fall semester classes end

18 holiday recess begins

[no classes through 1/02/05]