



December 2, 2017

To: Faculty Personnel Committee

From: Jennifer Ross

Re: Gary Cuddington's Third Year Review

The Department of Art & Archaeology has voted unanimously (6-0) to endorse Gary Cuddington's reappointment as Assistant Professor in Art & Archaeology. Having earned his MFA (the terminal degree in studio arts) from Rutgers in 2005, Gary has taught at Hood since 2010: as an adjunct instructor from 2010 to 2012, a visiting assistant professor from 2012 to 2015, and as a tenure-track assistant professor since 2015. Over this time, Gary has helped build our studio arts programs, both strengthening our 2D (drawing and painting) course offerings, and bringing together 2D and 3D media in both his upper level courses and his work as Studio Arts Coordinator. In college and university art programs across the US, faculty and students in these media are traditionally siloed and frequently antagonistic toward one another. It is a testament to Gary's considerable skills in community building that he has bridged these typical gaps, and given Hood's studio arts programs a much greater prominence at the college and in the wider community.

### *Teaching*

Gary Cuddington teaches a number of courses that are typical of studio arts programs around the world: four levels of drawing, three levels of painting, and a two-semester senior capstone sequence (The Business of Art and Senior Seminar). Drawing I (ARTS 123) is a prerequisite course for all studio arts majors and minors, and Painting I (ARTS 237) draws students with an interest in producing art but not becoming artists; these courses are therefore of interest to a general student population. He works with both intermediate and advanced students in the 2D media at which he himself excels, and advanced students in all media in the senior capstone courses, which prepare students for both a major exhibition and for life in the art world beyond college. Besides these traditional courses, Gary has introduced or taken on others relating to his area of expertise, such as Color Theory and Watercolor Painting, in which students can expand their skills, as well as innovative and provocative courses like Phantasmagoria (ARTS 3160). A departmental colleague described the first sight of the artwork made in the Color Theory class from blue painter's tape in the windows of Gambrill Gym as shocking and impressive; Gary was using the circumstance of the department's displacement from Tatem Arts Center as an opportunity to let his students explore light and shadow through non-traditional media, in an often spooky, largely deserted place. While this innovative approach was the product, in part, of necessity, it illustrates the ways in which Gary's courses problematize materials and challenge students to find their own personal means and standards of expression.

The syllabi and other teaching materials included in Gary's dossier demonstrate the careful planning and thought that go into each of his classes, with each level building on the previous one in terms of students' artistic and personal development. The two letters from Georgette Jones expand on that nicely, indicating that even within a single course, she could see the ways in which Gary framed each day's goals to build on previous days and weeks, and that even within a lesson, students progressed from experiment, to example, to practice, to mastery. He works alongside the students, allowing them to witness ways in which he overcomes problems and works through challenges; this lessens the pressure they feel when called on to perform similar tasks. Gary is able to approach each student on their own terms, gently guiding their progress with encouragement and reinforcement. His quiet demeanor means that the classroom atmosphere remains unrushed and noncompetitive, allowing the students to advance at their own pace. At the same time, as Martha Bari notes in her observations of Gary's teaching, he also values discomfort in his own practice, and urges students to challenge their assumptions in order to grow as artists and thinkers. Department members noted this unique combination of spontaneity and structure as central to the success of his courses.

The respect that students gain for Gary, and especially for his teaching methods, is borne out in their evaluations of his courses. Students report being inspired by him, citing both the skills they learned and the guidance and feedback he provided, allowing them to develop their creativity and techniques further, without feeling threatened or diminished. While all faculty members are aware of the difficulty in providing feedback and grades to students who might view these as personal "judgments," the challenge is particularly high in the creative arts, where students put their hearts into the creation of original, expressive work. Even when Gary's students report, in evaluations, that they felt "overwhelmed" or "rushed," there is no question that he supported their development and focused on the continual process of learning. While the grade distributions reported in Gary's dossier may appear high in comparison to the department's and college's overall grades, this is a normal feature of studio arts courses, both at Hood and beyond. The most significant praise comes from the students who took the 400-level capstone courses, who feel more prepared to face life beyond Hood because of their work with him.

### *Service*

It seems appropriate to document Gary Cuddington's service in the section following teaching, because for Gary, these two elements are intertwined. His service as Studio Arts Coordinator began in 2012, while he was still a visiting faculty member in the department. As is evident from the description of duties included in Gary's dossier, there is an extensive set of responsibilities, which Gary performs in collaboration with Jackie Scott, the Studio Arts Manager, the gallery director (Jenna Gianni), and the department chair. Studio arts courses (not including those in the graduate Ceramic Arts programs, which are overseen by Joyce Michaud) comprise about one-half the department's course offerings each semester. Unlike courses in art history and archaeology, most are taught by adjunct faculty, and therefore require more intensive coordination and communication than the rest of our courses. These courses are also facility-, equipment- and supply-heavy, and often require hiring models from outside the college. Gary manages all of these duties adroitly. Especially important and impressive have been the meetings he holds once or twice each semester for all of the studio arts instructors, attended also by the department chair; here, he elicits instructors' input on their needs, and communicates about

policies, Blackboard, Self-Service, and more. With Jackie Scott, he deals with safety and environmental standards within each of the studios. He also oversees the Community Arts Program, which brings Frederick County residents in for a Friday open painting studio every week.

In his capacity as Studio Arts Coordinator and as a member of the department, Gary's service is constantly oriented toward student needs and achievements. These priorities came to the fore especially during the renovation of Tatem Arts Center, which was, in general, poorly organized and communicated on the part of the administration (especially Facilities and the interim Provost), and terribly disruptive to all of the department's programs. The studio arts courses were especially scattered, with courses taking place in the Hodson Science and Technology Center, Hodson Annex, Gambrill Gym, and Rosenstock. Despite this disruption, Gary continued to coordinate programs in a professional manner, and his advocacy was especially important to the way in which Tatem was renovated; in the reopened building, the second floor computer lab (Tatem 216) was upgraded with Macintosh computers, as is standard among professional photographers and videographers, and graphic artists (discussed in Donna Bertazzoni's letter in the dossier). Even more significant were upgrades to all of the studio spaces and the creation of a studio space for seniors working on exhibitions; this new space includes areas where students can work individually, and a large area for group discussion and critique. This is also a space where the new art club, the Art Collective, meets and works; it is all part of Gary's goal of community-building among the studio arts students and alumni. These renovations also stand out as a component of Gary's many activities in recruiting students to the department and the college. In this and other areas, his perception is prominent: he recognizes needs and acts on them, whether in the area of curriculum development (the graphic arts minor and in-progress art therapy major), recruitment, or faculty development, all in the interest of providing the best education and opportunities for Hood's students.

Finally, both Kevin Bennett and Katy Fulfer highlight Gary's service outside the department; his work on both the Humanities Council (2013-15) and Curriculum Committee (2015-17) benefits both the department and the college. Especially illustrative of that were the two group exhibitions he organized in connection with the Humanities Colloquium themes: "Photographs of Home" and "Impossible Dreams." Both presented work by Hood students, but also brought in work by faculty and students at Frederick Community College, Stevenson, and Goucher; these events both enhanced Hood's reputation in the larger art world and built bridges among students. Regarding Gary's service on the Curriculum Committee, Kevin Bennett's letter highlights his thoughtful questioning, and his advocacy of the balance of high academic standards, fairness, and student needs.

### *Scholarly Work/Studio Practice*

Gary's scholarly work is his creative output, marked by the same spontaneity and structure experienced by students in his courses. The electronic dossier format allows for the experience of looking through Gary's portfolio, the typical method for an artist to demonstrate his practice and process to people outside his studio. The letters from artists Chris Ernst and Elena Volkova speak to Gary's creativity, his work ethic, and his capacity to achieve a balance

of realism and dystopia in his paintings, pulling viewers into a fictional world of discomfort and disruptions.

The Art & Archaeology Department's standards for scholarly production in studio art follow the guidelines set by the College Art Association (CAA), the principal national scholarly organization for art historians and visual artists. The CAA standards indicate that "exhibition of creative work is to be regarded as analogous to publication in other fields." Gary Cuddington fulfills this criterion well; since coming to Hood in 2012, he has actively created and exhibited original artwork in a number of two-person and group shows in Frederick and Baltimore. In a number of cases, including the *Psychometry* show with Lisa York at Hood, and the upcoming *Occulted Visions* installation with Chris Ernst from Stevenson University, Gary works collaboratively with his partner artist, their work playing off one another to create a visionary and visual whole that is greater than its parts. The process itself is a source of creativity and energy. Gary's work has been featured in *Studio Visit Magazine*, a juried publication of an international array of artists, whose work is selected by professional curators for each printed and digital edition. As Gary prepares for his next dossier, his application for tenure, the department expects to see him extend his geographical range, exhibiting beyond Maryland, and securing additional reviews and publications of his work, which is deserving of a wider audience.

In conclusion, Gary Cuddington's presence within the Department of Art & Archaeology, and at Hood more generally, has made a tremendous impact on our students and programs. His energy and talent provide inspiration to students at all levels of artistic endeavor, and he is a valued colleague. We whole-heartedly support his application for reappointment.