

Jack Mauch

Artist / Designer / Craftsman / Core Student, Penland School
Penland, North Carolina

Where is your studio?

I work in various studios at the Penland School of Crafts.

Do you work alone in your studio and do you prefer that to sharing studio space with other artists?

The majority of my studio time is spent in Penland workshops, where solitude is not an option. Though there are times of year when class is not in session, the studios I work in are not my own, and there are other Penland staff, core students, renters etc. The reality is, as a core student, I am virtually never alone in the studio. As a reaction to this, I dream of having autonomy in the studio. Of not sharing tools or space, and of working alone for an entire day without the looming threat of interruption. But then I remember the dialogue, feedback, inspiration, education and camaraderie that comes with working amongst fellow artists. This is the most treasured aspect of my time at Penland.

Do you keep regular hours of work time?

I try to weight my work hours to the time of day when there are the least number of people in the studio, which changes with every session. If the class I'm in tends to be a late night class, then I get up earlier to have a few hours of undistracted studio time.

Do you listen to music or prefer silence when you are most creative?

I always prefer music in the studio. I use it as a means to amplify whatever mood I already happen to be in. If I'm pumped to be in the studio, I throw on The Supremes, if I'm tired and depressed I listen to Townes Van Zandt, and if I'm just overwhelmed with emotions of every kind I listen to Leonard Cohen. (I listen to a *lot* of Leonard Cohen). Of course, it's not solely my decision, and though I occasionally have the pleasure of sharing musical taste with my studio-mates, I also find myself having to suffer through *Smooth Sounds of the Midnight Saxophone*, or Jeff Foxworthy stand-up, which can be a creative buzz-kill.

How would a visitor describe your studio? (for example: chaotic, obsessively tidy, comfortable or intimidating, etc.)

The phrase "littered with coffee cups" would probably come up.

Do you seek out conversations with other artists either formally (like a clay club, or XX Association, etc.) or informally (like looking for feedback from your artist friends or mates)?

Receiving feedback is a built in aspect of classes at Penland, either as a formal critique or through conversation. For me, one of the difficult aspects of working in a public studio is the feedback that comes at moments in my process when I am neither seeking it nor

prepared to hear it. The challenge is suffering the unwanted comments graciously, while remaining open enough to listen when someone says something affecting. In general, the most meaningful conversations are the ones that develop over time with fellow core students and other people who understand my work as a whole, and my history and ambitions as an artist.

Do you keep current with work in your field or prefer to work without the potential influences?

I keep current, but when you live at Penland this isn't saying much. All you have to do is look up.

What creative books or other sources do you find useful?

I mostly use the internet. I look at design and technology blogs, and the websites of artists I admire. I follow links and bop around until I come across something new and engaging. I'm interested not only in finding work, but also seeing the many ways that it is presented and written about.

When I use books, it's usually not for direct influence, but for general artistic rejuvenation. Books like *The Complete Engravings, Etchings and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer*, or *Hiroshige: Birds and Flowers* simply remind me that the potential for human creativity and skill is vast beyond my comprehension. If I could go to the Met everyday for this same reason I would.

What distracts you most from your work?

A desire to be physically comfortable. A lot of the time, I just want to leave the studio to go read a book, watch a movie, have a beer or sleep. Is there something wrong with that?

How do you nurture yourself to remain creative?

This is my biggest challenge as a core student. The short answer is I don't. I work until I burn out creatively, and then I keep working, and at some point it comes back, hopefully sooner than later. To live at Penland full time makes for a lifestyle that has very few opportunities for solitude or contemplation, which are the pillars of my life as an artist. Right now, I catch these quiet moments when I can, and just think of myself as being in creative boot-camp.

Do you make "office" time and is that a struggle to balance the artist with the business-person?

My strategy is to procrastinate on these sorts of tasks until I have the wind of last minute panic at my back. Works great!

How many years did it take for you to feel accomplished at your craft? And how many years have you been working in your materials or as an artist?

My recent work is entirely a result of my education at Penland this past year. Though I'm proud of the specific skills I have learned as a core student, my biggest accomplishment has been to gain the confidence in myself as a maker to be undaunted by working with unfamiliar materials, tools, and techniques, and to realize that most things are only hard until you do them. I hope that throughout my career as an artist, I will continue to not limit myself to the skills at which I am "accomplished".

Can you define "studio practice" as it relates to your life or share a personal philosophy about what contributed to your choice to be an artist, and how you approach that choice as a lifestyle?

It's important to me, as a maker of things, to be in the practice of engaging with the built environment, and the objects that comprise it, in a way that is always deliberate, critical and candid. Certainly, I view my own work in this way, but I believe that by extending this kind of thinking to the world at large, I can perpetually home in on my aesthetic values and come a little closer to making objects that are a true expression of these values.



Artist Statement

My work is made within a framework of calculated limits. The broadest and most significant of these is function. Function is the impetus for the object, and it informs the choices of material, process and form. For me, it is also what creates the challenge and enjoyment of making an object. Across the breadth of my work, function is the control, where all else are variables. My goal is to push the aesthetics to extreme limits while working within the boundaries of intended use. I work with multiple materials because I need to choose the one that gives me the most room for formal expression while being appropriate for the object. Once that material has been chosen, however, it is essential that the design pay respect to its properties. Thus, material becomes a second parameter for form, but also one that can be challenged. The exciting moments are when these elements are in tension, when the design begins to push the limitations of use and material without compromising them.

During the design process, my attention is given to the form. I consider the silhouette of the piece. It is imperative that the contour line created by this shape be dynamic from every angle. I imagine an axis on which the piece spins, and as it does, that line must be ever-changing while remaining fluid, graceful and engaging. As the shape is solidified, color, pattern and texture are added in ways that accentuate the form. Beyond this, I try to imbue that line with an evocation of nature, be it as blatant as taking the abstracted shape of an animal leg, or as subtle as having a curve that seems to have occurred organically under some mysterious force. One way or another, I seek to make the piece feel that it has an obvious reason for existing.

As the object is created, I give careful thought to efficiency of process as it relates to materials and operations. Just as I want to choose the appropriate material for a given object, I want to choose the appropriate way of working that material. I believe that an object created through means that are simple, efficient and elegant will be visually imbued with those qualities. With this attitude, process becomes a third parameter, and another prop on which to base formal decisions.

Through this process of establishing margins that create a space to contain my design choices, while deliberately using the design to push the limits of that space, I am better able to focus critical attention on nuances and dynamics of form. It is my hope that the sum of the choices I make yields an object that is a valid contribution to the made environment.

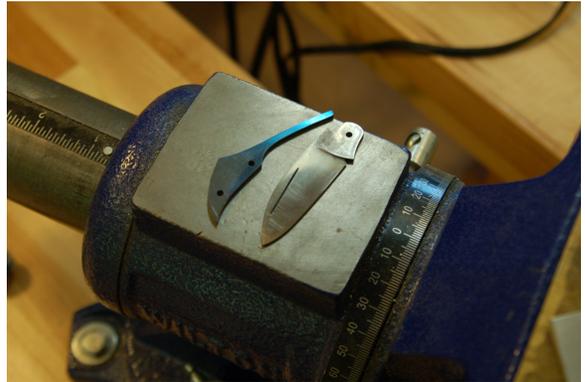
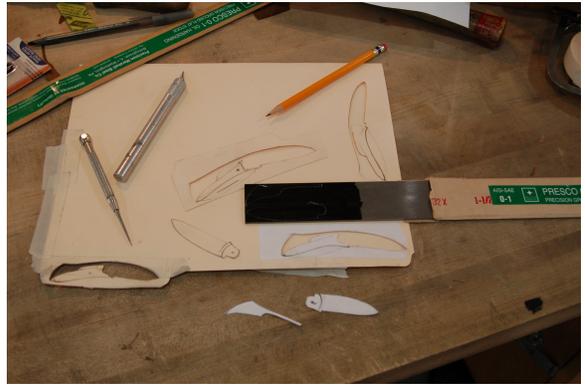
Exhibition Notes / Jack Mauch

The Tripod chair is a piece I made in a chair design summer class last year. The design is derived from an assignment to make a chair out of a single 2"x4"x10' board. The 2 boxes and the book were made in the books concentration that I took this fall. The book is an example of the techniques that we learned in class. The boxes are the way in which I interpreted those techniques to make them applicable to my work. The pocketknives are work that I made over the winter independently from any class. Though I had to trouble shoot technical issues, and in essence "teach myself" how to make them, my ability to successfully make these knives is a result of skills I learned as a core student at Penland.



Jack in the Penland iron studio





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EDUCATION

2011-2013 **Penland School of Crafts**, Penland, NC — Core Fellowship
2002-2006 **Maine College of Art**, Portland, ME — BFA in Ceramics, Dean's List

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2008-2010 **Harvard Graduate School of Design**, Cambridge, MA — Exhibition Designer, Fabricator
2007-2010 **Harvard University, Eliot House**, Cambridge, MA — Non-Resident Tutor of the Arts
2007-2009 **Brandeis University, Rose Art Museum**, Waltham, MA — Assistant Preparator
2009 **Children's Museum of Art**, New York, NY — Animation Instructor (one week course)
2006-2009 **Joe Kievitt Studio**, Portland, ME — Studio Assistant
2006-2007 **AMC Cold River Camp**, Evan's Notch, NH — Carpenter
2005 **Haystack Mountain School of Crafts**, Deer Isle, ME — Teaching Assistant (NE Workshop)
2005 **Jamie Johnston Furniture Design**, Portland, ME — Studio Assistant

EXHIBITIONS

2011 **The Core Show**, Gorelick Social Hall, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC
2011 **Fire on the Mountain**, Toe River Arts Council, Spruce Pine, NC
2007-2009 **The River Show**, Eliot House, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (annual exhibit, juried)
2006 **BFA Thesis Exhibition**, Institute of Contemporary Art, Portland, ME
2006 **Love Made Visible**, Friedman Student Gallery, Portland, ME
2005 **Merit Scholarship Competition**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME (1st place award)
2005 **NCECA Regional Student Exhibition**, Fox Gallery, Baltimore, MD (juried)
2005 **Next Generation IV**, Maine Center for Contemporary Art, Rockport, ME (juried)
2004 **Unearthed: Potters of the Northeast**, McGowan Fine Art, Concord, NH (invitational)
2004 **Merit Scholarship Competition**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME (2nd place award)
2004 **The BFA Show**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

2007-2010 **Senior Common Room**, Eliot House, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
2006 **Academic Writing Award**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME
2005 **Payson Merit Scholarship**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME (highest award given annually)
2005 **Work-study Scholarship**, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC
2004 **Bouton Barrett Endowed Memorial Scholarship**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME
2004 **Kiln God Scholarship**, Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts, Newcastle, ME
2003-2006 **Plan NH Granger Fellowship**, Plan NH, Portsmouth, NH
2003 **Doris Goodhue Dean Endowed Scholarship**, Maine College of Art, Portland, ME

REFERENCES

Available upon request