

Meet the Prof: Gail Panske

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The following faculty Q&A was submitted by the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Faculty Advocacy Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate. Jeff Lipschutz, professor of painting and drawing, wrote the introduction.

Gail is an artist of integrity and striking originality with a distinguished record of national and international exhibitions and residencies. She is a consummate teacher, the leader of our printmaking area and a tireless organizer of local artistic events. Gail is someone who, through her attentiveness to and concern for her colleagues both within and beyond her home department, holds our campus together.

For many years, she has played a lead role in galvanizing our local art community, while continuing to develop as an artist and achieve growing professional success. That might be her you sometimes see biking around town, helmet on and head down, so I won't say hats off to my respected colleague, but I will say I'm proud to know her.

How did you find your way to UW Oshkosh?

I am an Oshkosh native and received my undergraduate degree from UW Oshkosh. So my path to UW Oshkosh is different from most faculty. I left Oshkosh to attend graduate school at Indiana University. A few years later, I received a call from the Department of Art chair, Frank Utecht, asking if I could fill in for a faculty member who had become ill in the middle of the semester. I taught the last seven weeks of the spring semester and returned the following spring as an instructional academic staff. I joined the department as a full-time faculty member in 1991.

Why did you choose to go into your field?

I was always interested in art. My grandmother began painting when she was in her 60s and exhibited her work at local art fairs. My other grandmother and mother were very creative and did beautiful work in traditional craft areas like knitting and needlepoint. My family encouraged me to be a creative person. When I went to college, I was never pressured to "go into something where I could get a job."

I am an artist who works primarily in media of printmaking. I first fell in love with etching a plate in high school art class. In college, the technique of lithography fascinated me. As an undergraduate, I concentrated on printmaking and drawing. Printmaking brings together the physical processes of making the print matrix (woodcut block, etching plate, etc.) with the gesture and immediacy of drawing.

What is your favorite thing about UW Oshkosh?

The art students are very hard working and a joy to work with. The University and Department provide good facilities and many opportunities for the students and faculty to exhibit their work. For example,

there are multiple exhibition venues both on campus and in the local community, including the Gail Steinhilber Art Gallery in Reeve Union.

Galleries such as ArtSpace Collective Inc. and Jambalaya Co-op, both located in downtown Oshkosh, provide opportunities to be active in a cooperative artist group. The Priebe Gallery, located in the Arts and Communication Center, is an important venue that brings in a variety of art exhibitions and visiting artists to the campus.

What is the professional accomplishment of which you are most proud?

Winning a National Endowment For The Arts, Arts Midwest, Individual Artist Fellowship. The fellowships were open to all artists over 18 years of age living in the Midwest. A jury of arts professionals selected the fellowship winners from thousands of entries. Applications included samples of art work and an artist statement. Winners received a stipend, their work was promoted as part of the fellowship award announcements, a catalog was published, and there was an exhibition of the fellowship winners' work. These highly prestigious fellowships are no longer available, which is a travesty. It was a great honor to win the award.

What leadership or service activities are you involved in?

I am a founding member and current president of ArtSpace Collective Inc. ArtSpace is a co-op gallery that has been in downtown Oshkosh for 14 years. As a member of ArtSpace, I have been involved in the downtown Oshkosh Art Walks since their inception in 1996.

The most recent ArtSpace project is THE TRIENNIAL exhibition, in which I served as the co-coordinator. The goal of THE TRIENNIAL is to showcase the best of the visual arts in the tri-county area of Winnebago, Outagamie and Fond du Lac counties. Thanks to the support of Chancellor Wells and the UW Oshkosh Foundation, we were able to publish an exhibition catalog. Throughout the run of the exhibition, over 2000 viewers have come to see THE TRIENNIAL.

I was also part of the task force that organized The Pride of Oshkosh. Better known as "the lion project," Pride raised money for UW Oshkosh art student scholarships and an artist-in-residency program at the Paine Art Center and Gardens.

What is the most common misperception about what you do?

That I paint. Painting and sculpture are seen as art, so if you are an artist many people assume that you are a painter. In fact, I have painted — the house and the garage and the dining room — but I have not painted a picture since I was an undergraduate in an introductory painting class.

What is the most exciting project you are working on right now?

A series of three-dimensional print works that incorporate found objects such as used retail store display fixtures. Working on the 3D pieces is something new that I started to explore in the last few years. I also have been working on a number of monoprints (unique printed images). I participated in a monoprint workshop in May and have continued to work on the concepts that developed during the workshop. The

approach I have taken to making the monoprints is new and exciting, similar to the approach an artist might have to creating a drawing. It is a very fluid process.

How does what you research help you to be an effective teacher?

I could not be an effective teacher if I was not professionally active. The printmaking field is undergoing constant innovation, and there are always technical advancements, even in traditional media, so it is important to stay up to date. Many times the new techniques that are developed come from an artist working in their studio and trying something new. So being active in the studio is how an artist continues to grow as in their creative work and how innovations in technical processes come about.

Also, being active in the professional organizations helps when advising students about the variety of opportunities available to them. For example, there are many exhibition and residency opportunities open to students. I can guide them to the ones that best fit their goals and objectives because I have knowledge of the programs and the people running them. The same is true for students who may be considering pursuing graduate school.

Describe some ways your department serves Northeastern Wisconsin.

Through the exhibitions in the Priebe and Annex galleries, the Department of Art provides opportunities for people in the University and wider communities to see a wide range of contemporary art. The exhibitions and visiting artist activities are free and open to the public.

The students who graduate from the art department contribute in many ways to a better quality of life in Northeast Wisconsin and beyond. They contribute to our communities by being active in local arts organizations, they work as graphic designers at a variety of different businesses, they teach art in public and private schools, they work in museums and galleries, and they own and operate businesses.

Tell us about your family.

My husband Jim Evans and I recently adopted a dog, Luna, from the Oshkosh Area Humane Society. Luna has become the “store dog” at Jim’s business, Art Haus, which is located in downtown Oshkosh. Art Haus is an art supply and framing store. Jim is also a graduate of the UW Oshkosh art department. Together Jim and I are involved in many local art events, including the monthly Art Walks and ArtSpace Collective. We live in a small William Waters-designed home located on the northeast side of Oshkosh.

What are your hobbies?

I think of everything I do as being related to my artwork, so it is hard to think of anything being a hobby because as an artist, everything you do informs and influences your artwork. But I like being outdoors, in the garden, hiking, canoeing or riding my bike.

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