

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN

79th Annual Meeting

October 11 – 14, 2023

Report of the President

Greg Watts

A President's report—Some comments...

“Welcome to our annual meeting, a gathering that brings together the brightest minds in the realm of artistic and design education. I am honored to stand before you today and witness the collective passion and dedication that drives our association and its esteemed members. This annual meeting serves as a testament to the incredible work being done across our art and design institutions. It is a momentous occasion as we come together to share experiences, exchange ideas, and learn from one another; reaffirming our commitment to nurturing creative minds and shaping the future of higher education.

As we reflect upon the accomplishments of the past year, it is crucial to recognize the value of accreditation. Accreditation plays a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and standards of art and design education. It fosters excellence, promotes transparency, and provides students with confidence in the education they receive.

The accreditation process, with its rigorous evaluation and assessment, helps institutions continuously strive for improvement. It sets benchmarks for curriculum development, faculty qualifications, and student outcomes, to ensure an enriching and comprehensive educational experience. Accreditation not only benefits the institutions but also instills trust in potential employers, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to make a significant impact in their chosen fields.

At the National Association of ‘Schools’ of Art and Design, we remain steadfast in our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of accreditation in our member institutions. We recognize the significance of consistent evaluation and improvement to elevate the quality of education and artistic expression across the board.

During this annual meeting, let us celebrate the achievements of our member institutions and the profound impact they have on shaping the artistic landscape of our nation. Let us seize this opportunity to learn from one another, forge meaningful collaborations, and inspire each other to push the boundaries of creativity and innovation.

Let us make this annual meeting a catalyst for growth, knowledge-sharing, and collective advancement.¹

That ends the comments.

As your incoming President, I decided to look for some help in writing this report. I went back and read the reports of some of my recent predecessors for guidance. There's a lot of wisdom in their words. I offer my personal appreciation to the three immediate past Presidents – Sally McRorie, Jeff Nesen, and Denise Mullen for guiding me, not only in this exercise but also in so much more. What a lineup they are. I am humbled to follow them as each one has provided me with generous advocacy, support, and friendship in my life and in my administrative work. And I met each of them through my attendance at the NASAD Annual Meetings.

Back in 2017 Denise opened her remarks with the statement “change is everywhere.” How right she was – although I doubt she anticipated what change was coming in the form of a pandemic. Last year Sally discussed our purpose as a “community of enquiry” and in your Executive Committee’s planning for this meeting, that community intent has been repeated and extended for this year. Jeff, in 2018, suggested some advice for fellow administrators. He said, “move fast and try not to break anything.” In that punctual spirit I will follow the advice of one of my own professors regarding public speaking, “Be bold, be brief, be gone.”

Here's the “bold”: There was a fourth source for my comments. This one was driven by curiosity rather than a need for help. What I read to you until I said “That ends the comments” was written by an AI generator. From the moment AI was placed on our program as a topic, the devious corners of my mind started scheming. What might I be able to generate and run by you? I was curious. From decisions in the Admissions office to Tom Hanks not selling us dental plans, AI is pervasive and thus worthy of discussion. Now, some aspects of what I read to you felt to me like the contents of a discount store greeting card, but... my prompt of *Write brief comments for the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design and include an explanation about the value of accreditation* certainly had some close detail. That's something to consider...

“Be bold, be brief, be gone.”

Here's the “brief”: “AI—A Helpful Tool or a Dangerous Distraction” is our Open Forum offered to attendees on Saturday morning; I hope I have just encouraged your participation. Forums such as this one on Artificial Intelligence (AI) come because of advice from you—as to what you would like to see presented during our meeting. As I said, the continuation of Sally's “community of enquiry” was very much on our minds as we started to shape this meeting. We wanted to be sure that we responded to you. Last year in Jacksonville I was thrilled at the energy and the interaction between and among us. So, here in St. Louis our program is intentionally moving away from talking heads at a podium. Our intent is to encourage your

¹ The entire opening text offered in italics was AI generated.

shared participation. The Executive Committee heard your feedback and we hope that we are closer to being your “guide on the side” this year. Change (as Denise predicted) is everywhere and therefore, using it as our guide through discussions about our curriculum, its delivery, and our students’ preparedness will only help to prevent those breakages that Jeff recognized as we move forward.

“Be bold, be brief, be gone.”

Here’s the “be gone”: Thank you for being here. I sincerely hope you enjoy each other’s wisdom and company here in St. Louis.

Thank you.