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VCFA's MFA in Visual Art Program Pairs Students with Groundbreaking Artist-Teachers Throughout the Country

Artist-Teachers, such as feminist art pioneer Harmony Hammond, draw innovative students to the MFA in Visual Art program each year.

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Artist-Teacher Harmony Hammond (right) with current VCFA MFA in Visual Art student Christa Marquez Smith (left) during the July 2016 residency

At the MFA in Visual Art at Vermont College of Fine Arts (VCFA) — the oldest low-residency program of its kind in the country — students develop and challenge their art practice under the guidance of an Artist-Teacher who lives and works in the student’s home community.

Since 1991, the program has been pairing students with Artist-Teachers from around the world. While there is no set prescription for what constitutes this relationship, each Artist-Teacher is asked to engage the student in a rigorous and critical dialogue concerning the conceptual and material issues they confront in their work.

One longtime Artist-Teacher for VCFA is Harmony Hammond, a New Mexico-based artist, writer, and pioneer of the feminist art movement. For many years, Hammond has mentored MFA in Visual Art students who live throughout New Mexico and the Southwest. She has also visited VCFA’s Montpelier, Vermont campus several times as an Artist-in-Residence and is a staunch advocate for the College and the program.

“Because the curriculum is generated by an inter-disciplinary, inter-generational, bi-coastal core faculty who are themselves socially engaged creative practitioners (artists and art historians), this low residency program is the best in the country — the right balance of intellectual inquiry; theory; physical engagement with materials, processes, and audiences; personal expression; and critical thinking to push students beyond their comfort zone,” Hammond says.

VCFA’s Artist-Teachers embody the balance Hammond talks about. They are graduate-level educators and practicing artists, and they build relationships with students as mentors, critics, and as links to their regional artistic communities.

“I am continually amazed by the transformation that happens with each student in the program and the quality of their work as they graduate,” Hammond adds.

For more information about the MFA in Visual Art at VCFA, visit vcfa.edu/visual-art.