

Middlesex Community College Awarded \$40,000 NEA Grant

Middlesex Community College has been awarded a two-year, \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support preservation, understanding and appreciation of the endangered Cambodian ceramic tradition, and to encourage a new generation of practicing Cambodian ceramists.

Under the direction of MCC Art Professor Margaret Rack, the grant revolves around Lowell artist Yary Livan, a survivor of Cambodia's Pol Pot-era genocide and one of only a few surviving masters of classical Cambodian ceramics. It will allow Livan, who teaches ceramics at Middlesex, to expand his teaching to Lowell Public Schools students and the community. He will also train LPS teachers in the art and history of Cambodian ceramics, as well as create a body of work to go on exhibition. All programming will revolve around MCC's smokeless, wood-fired Cambodian ceramics kiln, recently constructed on the grounds of Lowell National Historical Park.

"Yary and I are thrilled," said Rack. "It is very gratifying that the NEA recognized the artistic merit of the project, and also the significant potential for students – of all ages, across Lowell – to engage in high quality creative work, and share deep cultural knowledge with local families."

Over the next two years, Livan will lead community workshops and create a ceramic-and-resin relief of a giant Naga – a guardian figure and mythological creature central to Cambodian beliefs – to be mounted on the kiln. He will also co-teach a graduate course, "Teaching Cambodian Ceramics," through the Lowell Teachers Academy.

The grant will also enable exhibits/workshops to take place at two Lowell schools with high enrollments of Cambodian students. These "family nights" will showcase student-made ceramics and promote intergenerational interaction around Cambodian art and culture. And finally, a major exhibition of Livan's work – as well as juried work by teachers and students – will be organized as part of the Cambodian New Year celebration in April 2015.

For more information about Middlesex Community College's \$40,000 National Endowment for the Arts grant, contact Art Professor Margaret Rack at rackm@middlesex.mass.edu or 978-322-8301.

MCC is one of the largest, most comprehensive community colleges in the state. We offer more than 75 degree and certificate programs, plus hundreds of noncredit courses, during the day, evening and weekend, on our Bedford and Lowell campuses, and online. Middlesex – a great place to begin your future!

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by Tura Linderholm