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STUDENTS ON SCHOOL

"There has been a shift in the way artists produce work [W]hen I attended ACA, you became technically proficient in one medium, and that was the vehicle through which you delivered all your ideas. Today, [for] many artists their process begins by selecting which medium or media will best execute the idea"

—Krista Clark (ACA 1998, Parsons 2012–2013, GSU 2016)
on transferring from Parsons to Georgia State University

"Naturally, a smaller program has less variety and availability of certain opportunities So, there are trade-offs. It's natural for these differences to exist in institutions of various sizes and intentions It all depends on what it is you are most desiring in a school."

—Wesley Terpstra (SCAD 2004, GSU 2015) on the availability of opportunity and choice at SCAD, and the intimacy and focus at GSU

"[A] crucial addition to anyone's education is ... real-world experience [As an undergraduate] I interned ... freelanced ... and served as president of ExLucis, GSU's photography club."

—Beau Torres (GSU 2013, International Center of Photography-Bard 2015)
on his experience at Georgia State University

"I remember worrying about the future and how to transition from being an artist in school to being a working artist. I felt there were things to learn that you don't always have the time to cover in the classroom. When I started making more frequent visits to the undergraduate advisor ... I started to find the answers [S]ometimes it all boils down to asking the right people the right questions. The help and answers are there, you just have to be motivated and keep yourself and your faculty accountable."

—Beau Torres

"And of course, [there's] cost. Living in Atlanta ... I can be in graduate school and still maintain a healthy lifestyle, a challenge I ultimately gave up [on] while living in New York."

—Krista Clark

"I felt the distress of being a minority in the program, and it was not due to the color of my skin. I felt archaic with my pens and paper as I was surrounded by the constant shipments of drywall and two-by-fours required for my neighbors' installations I often felt my critiques grew stagnant because we could not progress beyond the fact my work was drawing-based as opposed to sculptural I was an artist with a focus on drawing and printmaking, among conceptual, installation, performance, and video artists."

—Krista Clark

Originally from Vermont, Krista Clark has lived in Atlanta since 1995. She is currently pursuing her MFA at Georgia State University.

Originally from Minnesota, Wesley Terpstra has called Georgia home for most of the past decade. A third-year student in Georgia State's MFA program, he works primarily in painting.

Beau Torres is a photo-based artist living in Brooklyn, NY. His current work addresses a new dialect in the language of photography situated at the intersection of photography, sculpture, and online culture.

This sentiment is echoed by detractors of the MFA system on this side of the pond. In an interview with *GalleristNY*, one otherwise anonymous "Bruce" said, "That you would have a professional degree to do something that's not professional seems like a scam."³⁴ The qualifications of the profession and relative professionalism—or lack thereof—in the arts are all being questioned. According to Relyea, the questions go deeper. "You have all these anthologies about the 'educational turn' and this idea that the kunsthalle are modeling themselves after schools."³⁵ Relyea sees the turn toward education-as-social-engagement to be part of greater trends: "Once it gets [to] the Manifesta [European Biennial of Contemporary Art] level—when it gets that kind of funding and gets that glamorous—it's both symptom and reactionary. I don't think it's all that bad, but ... it's not enough to just rely on a kind of boilerplate argument about the inherent progressiveness of teaching and seminar-leading. You need people to be more self-critical." Encouraging such self-criticism might go a long way, not only in art school curricula, but in these institutions' very internal structures. At schools including GSU, a new emphasis is being placed on evolving pedagogy to keep up with the times and envisioning futures for students after the degree. While they face many obstacles, with proper reform, public institutions may stand to give private and for-profit schools a run for their money.

Lilly Lampe is a writer and art critic based in Atlanta, Georgia.

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