

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION

Approved by the Regents
May 15, 2008

The University of Michigan School of Art and Design

Rebekah Modrak, associate professor of art and design, without tenure, School of Art and Design, is recommended for the granting of tenure to be held with her title of associate professor of art and design, School of Art and Design.

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A. 1996 Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
B.F.A. 1992 Alfred University, School of Art and Design, New York State College of Ceramics, Alfred, NY

Professional Record:

2005 – present Associate Professor of Art and Design, without tenure, School of Art and Design, University of Michigan
2003 – 2005 Roman J. Witt Visiting Associate Professor, School of Art and Design, University of Michigan
2002 – 2003 Associate Professor, with tenure, Department of Art, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
1997 – 2002 Assistant Professor, Department of Art, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Evaluation Summary:

Teaching – Rebekah Modrak is a resourceful and challenging teacher who finds innovative ways to stretch her students to their limits. Her deep and broad knowledge of contemporary art practices is a mainstay of her pedagogy. She often amplifies this exposure to art practice with visits from outside guests and relevant field trips. She challenges her students with tough critiques, holds them to high standards, and knows how to guide them toward increasing independence. Her creative investigations and experimentation with shifting perspectives is a model for her students, one that is readily apparent in the classroom. Most important, she structures her classes so that students step out of their comfort zone and reach beyond what they can imagine.

Creative Work / Research – Rebekah Modrak's work is an ambitious exploration of visual perception through uniquely experimental visual imaging technologies. Centered primarily around photography, all of her work involves the struggle between the expected structure and dimensions of a particular technology and her desire to make that equipment or system work in a new context. Her major work is the groundbreaking textbook *Redefining Photography: A New Introduction* (2009, Laurence King Ltd., London, England). This book will be the first to integrate photographic history, theory and practice into the same discussion, making the strong and important argument that concept and technique are inextricably linked. Her other two major bodies of work, one sculptural and the other digital, also transgress boundaries and create multiple ways of seeing. In her *Reconfigured People* series she created three-dimensional figures whose surfaces are photographic images. Through the combination of 2D and 3D form, she creates distorted people who display vulnerable and disturbing states of being. In her *ebayaday*

project, she explored issues of labor, production and distribution by questioning and recombining art and commerce. Her work continuously calls into question assumed categories and borders, challenging us to extend our vision beyond what we know.

Significant Recent Works and Activities:

- 2009 *Redefining Photography: A New Introduction*, Laurence King, Ltd., London, England
- 2007 Curator, *ebayaday: DOCUMENTS*, Work•Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor, MI
- 2005 *Portraits*, Exhibition, Upper Arlington Gallery, Upper Arlington, OH
- 2005 Chair, Panel: *Photographic Vision*, Sight Lines: The Culture and Science of Vision, Annual Conference of the New England American Studies Association, New Haven, CT
- 2004 *Creativity: Beyond the Norm*, Exhibition, Ross Art Museum, Delaware, OH

Service – Rebekah Modrak has distinguished herself as a colleague and citizen of the School of Art and Design. She has worked to enlarge the School’s community through developing collaborative relationships across the campus and across continents, efforts that have resulted in bringing renowned artists-designers to campus and in educational exchange partnerships in Suriname and Germany. She has served on and chaired numerous faculty committees and has worked with colleagues to identify and implement new strategies and protocols for such critical activities as annual student reviews and the Penny W. Stamps Distinguished Visitors Program. In addition, she is an enthusiastic participant in the School’s undergraduate recruitment efforts.

External Reviewers

Reviewer A: “Most of her work is highly critical of business and the market, but she also looks at the artist as entrepreneur and business person as artist. This stance allows her to feel at home when thinking about business. With her work on eBayaday, for example, she brought conceptual art to the commercial marketplace in a way that erased the boundaries between objects on display, objects for sale, and signs to think with.”

Reviewer B: “I am eager for the publication of Professor Modrak’s *Photography in the 21st Century*. It will be a unique and valuable contribution to photography education. There is no other book like it on the market: It ingeniously combines theory, history, and technique in a field, photography, which is notorious for separating the three, especially for students in introductory courses who are usually taught photography in mechanistic and reductionistic ways. Her book will make a difference.”

Reviewer C: “...I think the book is a substantial achievement that offers a wonderful contribution to the field...It introduces complex subjects in an accessible way yet possesses levels of intricacy that should continue to engage advanced students. I can say for myself, with over 25 years of experience in the field, that I learned a great deal from just one reading and look forward to others to come.”

Reviewer D: “Her notion that history, technique, process and concepts can and should be taught simultaneously should be applauded...”

Reviewer E: “...*Redefining Photography: A New Introduction* is unique. I predict that it will be looked back on ten years from now as the seminal textbook responsible for a shift in the way

photography is both understood and practiced in the arts. This book is a major intellectual contribution to this area.”

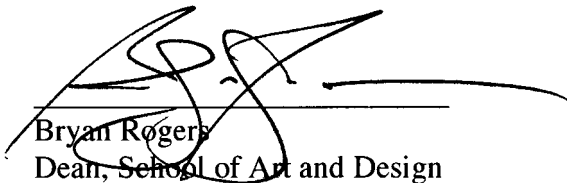
Reviewer F: “I suspect that should Modrak wish, she could establish a very strong reputation as a theorist of reproduction...I have no doubt that this book will enjoy strong demand both within the academy and with an educated public composed of individuals increasingly feeling the pressure to be the author of their own ‘reproductions.’”

Reviewer G: “Her upcoming book is sweeping and thoughtful. It is by no means a cookie-cutter academic text. Rather, it is a broad and inclusive rethinking of what photography has become as a 21st century medium, with innumerable tangents and implications.”

Reviewer H: “Through her willingness to test and apply her theories, not only to her artwork but also to teaching as well as in curating exhibitions, Modrak may well become an important contributor to the understanding and uses of imaging technology.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Rebekah Modrak is a highly innovative and intellectually challenging artist. I strongly recommend the granting of tenure to be held with her title of associate professor of art and design, School of Art and Design.



Bryan Rogers
Dean, School of Art and Design

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