

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
School of Art and Design

Approved by the Regents
May 14, 2009

Nicholas A. Tobier, assistant professor of art, School of Art and Design, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of art and design, with tenure, School of Art and Design.

Academic Degrees:

M.F.A. 1997 Milton Avery Graduate School/Bard College, Sculpture, Annandale, NY
B.A. 1989 Swarthmore College, History/Art, Swarthmore, PA

Professional Record

2003 – present Assistant Professor, School of Art and Design, University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, MI
1999 – 2003 Assistant Professor, Foundations, School of Art, New York State College of
Ceramics, Alfred, NY
1989 – 1999 Lecturer, 3D Foundations, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA

Evaluation Summary

Teaching – Professor Tobier is a gifted and charismatic teacher. Professor Tobier invests his classes with a great deal of imagination and creativity, giving students unusual – but pedagogically sound – assignments that many students said “pushed them out of their comfort zone.” He is described by students as having high expectations, but as also being extremely patient, dedicated, and respectful of each student’s unique gifts. Many of Professor Tobier’s courses involve a community engagement component, and it is this social aspect of his teaching – together with incisive and articulate criticism – that inspires students to create excellent work, and to re-think their role as artists in the larger world.

Creative Work – Professor Tobier’s creative work focuses on social interaction. His performances and performing objects are designed to invite conversation, and to foster unlikely interactions across established social barriers – particularly those of class and race. Drawing on his background in landscape architecture, Professor Tobier is especially concerned with “public space,” and he designs his objects and performances to catalyze civic engagement. His work has received broad exposure, in venues ranging from the Philadelphia Fringe Festival, to the Queens Museum of Art, to the Overgaden Institute for Contemporary Art, Denmark. Since 2001, he has created over twenty, distinct solo performances, in addition to his participation in a myriad of group shows at universities and galleries nationally and internationally. His work has received the attention of many well-known publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Toronto Sun*, *Globe, and Mail*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Significant Recent Work and Activities:

2008 *tick tock boom boom*, a public performance at the Foundation Noordkaap, Dordecht,
Netherlands
2007 *Ship Notes*, a performance at the *Philadelphia Fringe Festival*

- 2006 *Small Cascade for a Large City*, a site-specific installation/performance in a public wading pool, Toronto, ON
- 2006 *22 Fillmore*, a public performance sponsored by City|Space, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 *Presto's Traveling Lecture Series*, performance, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland

Service

Professor Tobier's service extends from the School of Art and Design to the larger community. He has been a member of the Arts of Citizenship Executive Committee, as well as serving as a teacher and design advisor for an urban agriculture program at the Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit. He has been an active participant in the School of Art and Design's *Detroit Connections* project with elementary school students, and was the faculty co-leader of a trip to Surinam for the School's first-year graduate students.

External Reviewers

Reviewer A: "I was most impressed by his projects with students. This seems to be the place where all his ideas merge and blossom. He offers a wide range of resources for the students that move across media and discourses, in an effort to engage them with the topic on all levels, providing artistic, historical and political contexts."

Reviewer B: "Nick Tobier has a prolific art practice that pushes the boundaries of contemporary art, intervening within some of the most important debates in aesthetic theory over the past fifty years. His focus on the everyday and situational art locates his project within a long lineage of artists and theorists who have emphasized the importance of freeing art from cloistered institutions and intervening directly in the quotidian."

Reviewer C: "Nick's works also possess a level of material production, through crafted objects, meticulous drawings and handmade costumes, that is not often seen in the larger field of socially-based practice...."

Reviewer D: "The type of work that Nick does is not, actually, easy to do; it requires a finely calibrated sensibility, one that moves deftly between space, objects, image, and movement as the elements of a visual composition.... Nick's work speaks on its own, but it does remind me of why we make art – to wake ourselves up and to enliven the spirits of those around us. Nick does this quite well."

Reviewer E: "His work enriches international exhibitions and festivals in the wide field of transversal art, fine art, film and performing arts."

Reviewer F: "Nick Tobier's work...is highly inventive, remarkably communicative, and ingenious."

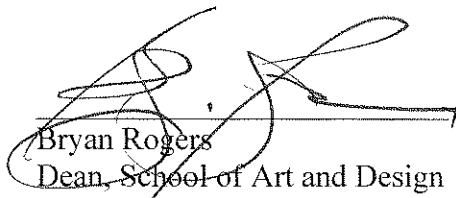
Reviewer G: "Tobier's work challenges our received notions of what art is or should be, and opens the possibility that the world is not rooted in its traditional certainties. With gentle humor, sincere good will, and evident intelligence, the work calls for social engagement without prescribing exactly what the action should be. I suspect that after seeing Tobier's performances, lectures, events, and installations, the viewer is compelled to rethink his or her own place in the world."

Reviewer H: "...the quality of his work is impressively high, displaying a combination of research, thoughtfulness, skill and smarts that is rare."

Reviewer I: "I find his practice to be incredibly generous, as it engages directly with people, encouraging an open, reciprocal exchange between the artist and participants in a variety of public settings and social situations."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Nicholas A. Tobier is a unique and prolific voice in the field of public/site specific performance and installation. He is an inspiring and committed educator who challenges students to deeply examine their social role as artists, and as citizens. I highly recommend him for promotion to associate professor of art and design, with tenure, School of Art and Design.



Bryan Rogers
Dean, School of Art and Design

May 2009