

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design

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

2009 – present Associate Professor of Art, with tenure Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
2003 – 2009 Assistant Professor of Art, Penny W. Stamps 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
1998 – 1999 Lecturer, 3D Foundations, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Tobier’s teaching is wide-ranging, well received by students and respected by peers. His multidisciplinary practice and broad spectrum of interests are reflected in the range of courses he has developed and co-developed with both university and community partners. Professor Tobier’s teaching spans several units of the university and engages students from diverse educational trajectories. Across all of these contexts, Professor Tobier’s methodology focuses on empowering students to explore possibilities and emphasizes both the joy and critical thinking that enriches these investigations. Students praise his infectious enthusiasm and passion, as well as his vast knowledge and appreciate his genuine interest and efforts to engage them as individuals. For many, his influence has been categorized as “transformative.”

Creative Work / Research – Professor Tobier’s creative practice focuses on art and design projects that engage the public. His public and community projects have distinguished him as a leader in the field of socially engaged art and design. His creative work has been exhibited and performed internationally (Belgium, Czech Republic, Canada, England, Germany, Hungary, India, Scotland, Serbia, and Spain) and throughout the United States in galleries and museums including the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Smithsonian, and the Urban Institute of Contemporary Art. His creative work has also appeared in festivals that challenge the boundaries of art including the Edinburgh, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia fringe festivals. His public projects have included collaborating with numerous community partners including REBUILD Foundation in Chicago, Community Action Network in Ann Arbor, and Toronto Tourist Commission. His extensive work in Detroit includes collaborations with the Detroit Bureau of Tourism, Brightmoor Alliance and Capuchin Soup Kitchen. Professor Tobier’s creative work has been recognized and supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (2015) to develop the Brightmoor MakerSpace. He has also received grants from the Knight Foundation (2014), the New York State Council for the Arts (2000), and the Harpo Foundation (2009).

Significant Recent Works and Activities

- 2015 Solo Exhibition, Terrain Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2015 Exhibition and Public Project, *A Stand for Action*, Museo Antiquoa, Medellin, Columbia
- 2015 Exhibition, *Lying-sitting-standing-walking-jumping-flying/falling*, KunstlerForum, Boon, Germany
- 2015 Group Exhibition, *Off the Shelf*, ikelektik Lab, London, UK
- 2015 Grant Recipient, The National Endowment for the Arts, in collaboration with Community Action Network, Ann Arbor, MI
- 2015 Tobier, Nick and Juliane Stiegele, eds. *Utopia Toolbox, Vol II*, University of Michigan Press and Toolbox Books, Ann Arbor and Munich, 2015.
- 2015 Curatorial Project, *Lettering in Public*, Signal Return, Detroit, MI
- 2014 Solo Exhibition, *Public Lettering*, Incident Report, Hudson, NY
- 2014 Solo Performance, *City of Carts*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, NY
- 2014 Community Project, *Design for Public Action: A Stand for Action*, El Mercato (FleaMarket, southwest Detroit)
- 2014 Community Project, *In the Neighborhood*, Dorchester Projects/REBUILD Foundation Chicago, IL
- 2014 Community Project, *Design for Public Action: Contemporary Carpas, People's Community Services/Boulevard House*, Detroit, MI
- 2013 Solo Exhibition, *Brightmoor Bikes*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, MI
- 2013 Solo Performance, *Music Box Marching Band*, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
- 2013 Group Exhibition, *Spontaneous Interventions*, City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, Chicago, IL

Service – Professor Tobier is an active citizen of the academy, one who has worked to promote interdisciplinary collaborations and partnerships within the university through committee efforts, leadership roles, and mentoring students. Within the Stamps School, he has served on the Executive Committee, InterArts Committee, and Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. In his role as the director of National Engagement and Detroit faculty engagement coordinator, he has developed partnership opportunities and interdisciplinary initiatives for faculty, staff and students. These include networking events with Stamps alumni, exhibitions, and residencies. Within the university, Professor Tobier serves as senior counselor to the provost on Faculty Civic Engagement. In this role, he actively works to develop partnerships between the community and university. Professor Tobier has also established partnerships throughout the community including a funded artist and designer in residence program (Michelle Scharra Residency) in the Detroit schools and serves as the lead faculty for the Brightmoor MakerSpace in Detroit.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "Professor Tobier's public constructions, guest work, civic interruptions, and other creative activities are of the highest quality among those engaging in this type of creative work. Since promotion to Associate Professor he has continued to hone his artistry through an impressive number of community-based projects, solo exhibitions, and performances and group exhibitions and performances. Rarely have I encountered a dossier where excellence is distributed across such a quantity of work."

Reviewer B: “Nick’s creative work and record places him among the national leaders in the area of socially engaged practice in the arts. He is a highly regarded educator and there is strong evidence that his creative work will continue to grow.”

Reviewer C: “Nick is clearly an artist of protean gifts. There is an exciting range in the works he has submitted to you for review. In Nick’s skilled hands, pressing issues of social and economic justice reflected in the basics of transport, food, education, and work intersect with the sublime, the serendipitous, and the satirical. His commitment to art as a vehicle for sending received notions into the ether, as a provocation to shift paradigms, and as a sleight of hand producing wonder and delight all the while --- is total. He believes that art can *work* and that work *is*, or can be...art.”

Reviewer D: “There is a clear narrative through-line from his creative practice into his teaching. The degree and level of interaction between his students and various publics is also strong and carefully conceived. There are significant risks involved in these kinds of engagement, but Professor Tobier clearly frames the ethical purposes and provides an approach that is rigorous. Professor Tobier’s emphasis on collaboration, service, and community also extends to multiple realms including the university community and across disciplines at the national level.”

Reviewer E: “It is in public spaces and community life that he is able to raise complex questions about creative work and the role of the artist and designer. Whereas public engagement can often be conceptualized as separate from academic practice, for Dr. Tobier, it is in public spaces that he finds ‘immediacy, direct application, and a complex set of questions to contend with as the fertile territory of interdependent creative work and citizenry.’ It is through public engagement that he is able to let art and design address questions of social justice in a diverse democracy, a second central dimension of his engagement work.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Tobier is an innovative artist and designer, passionate community collaborator, and thought-provoking instructor. He is a true contributor to the advancement of creative expression and community engagement within the school, the university, and profession. I strongly recommend Nicholas A. Tobier for promotion to professor of art and design, with tenure, Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design.



Gunalan Nadarajan
Dean and Professor, Penny W. Stamps
School of Art and Design

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