

An open letter to Cornell Faculty

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Dear Friends,

Someone will always be compelled to count beans and (more tragically) accept the results as an accurate assessment of value. It is certainly convenient, but lazy thinking, and hardly an effective way of assessing value in academic pursuits. Therefore, I offer this response to the characterization by a member of LAC at yesterday's Faculty Senate meeting of my current involvement at Ward Lab as "Art department, one hour." I'm puzzled as to where that "one hour" comes from—certainly it does not accurately represent the time I've spent there over the past 8 years unless one is counting in biblical days. Nor does it accurately represent my current involvement with the lab with on-going projects on the table, delayed only because of recent changes in personnel there.

I admit to being a minor user of the facility. A number of my colleagues have documented to the LAC and the Faculty Senate much more substantial usage. However, I would like to note the extended influence of my meager "one hour" presence in the lab.

- Ten years ago, a small group of us led by Prof. Emeritus James W. Mayer (Francis Bard Professor of Material Science and Engineering) fabricated the interdisciplinary course "Art, Isotopes and Analysis" which currently is listed as "Art, Archaeology and Analysis". It is one of the truly interdisciplinary courses currently being taught on campus (at one time cross-listed in 9 departments), and with a current enrollment of 210 students from across the university. For the accountants out there, that is 630 credits worth of tuition, and for my part, the university pays out \$0 in faculty salary. This course would not exist at this point if not for the support of Ward Laboratory over the years.
- My recently published book "The Science of Paintings", co-authored by Prof. Emeritus James W. Mayer and published by Springer-Verlag, would not be as complete an account of analytical practice in the service of art if not for the research that I have engaged in at Ward Lab over the past 8 years. Descriptions of Neutron Induced Autoradiography are supported with examples produced at Ward Lab.
- A detailed description of my own research and artistic practice is perhaps too arcane for most to appreciate, but I must say that my current concerns have been profoundly affected by my experiences at Ward Lab. For some years, my activities there were discussed in the conventional language of research, but all along, my real interest has

been to somehow utilize the method and results of Neutron Induced Autoradiography as an extension of studio practice-that is, as an art production process. I have, in fact, exhibited autoradiographs produced at Ward Lab in galleries in Los Angeles and Washington, DC.

- Two projects at Ward Laboratory that I have been involved with have been in a suspended state in recent months due to a change in personnel at the lab, but I would hope that the work will continue. One of these projects is in collaboration with the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art on campus. Interdisciplinary initiatives of this nature have far ranging academic consequences which affect undergraduate education as well as graduate and faculty research.

I am hard pressed to understand the arguments posed by the LAC. The simplest method of accounting seems to have been implemented here, reflecting an extremely narrow and uninspired vision of academic enterprise.

Sincerely,

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