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## NEW SESSION OF ART & ENVIRONMENT KICKS OFF THIS WEEK

### *INNOVATIVE PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INTEGRATED INTO CURRICULA*

*"This is a beautiful, beautiful example right here in Columbus of how universities and public schools and arts and cultural organizations are cooperating to improve the quality of education for students." — Ron Stowe, President of the Institute for Arts & Education, an affiliate of the Smithsonian, on the Wexner Center's Art & Environment program*

The Wexner Center for the Arts welcomes its third class of junior and senior high school students from urban and suburban schools in the **Art & Environment** course, **a 19-week program that kicked off this week**. In this innovative course, students interact with nationally known artists and Ohio State faculty members in a range of scientific fields, thereby encouraging students' intellectual curiosity and artistic creativity. The course has been specifically designed to integrate arts and science education while introducing students to interdisciplinary research; it is also in alignment with State of Ohio curriculum standards for student development.



"This program represents a real innovation in presenting an arts center as a site for extended, interdisciplinary learning," says Shelly Casto, the Wexner Center's Director of Education. "Students in past years have been inspired to work independently on substantial research projects, while being introduced to the highest level of practitioners in the fields of art and science. They're encouraged to think about learning as something that could happen outside of school walls."

Wexner Center Director Sherri Geldin adds, "*Art & Environment* emphasizes the center's commitment to providing cross-disciplinary experiences for students while providing more substantive and immersive educational opportunities rather than one-time/one-off visits. We're proud of the growing success of this pioneering initiative, and we look forward to welcoming our third class of students."

This year brings 18 students from New Albany, Upper Arlington, Columbus Alternative, Fort Hayes, Africentric Early College, Thomas Worthington, Linworth Alternative, Worthington Kilbourne, Hilliard Davidson, Hilliard Darby, and Groveport Madison high schools, plus the Christopher Program. Students were chosen through an application process and will receive credit for the course, which meets Wednesdays for 2 ½ hours. (The inaugural class of ninth graders at Columbus's new Metro School is also eligible to participate in an abbreviated version of *Art & Environment*.)

In addition to their core "studies" at the Wexner Center guided by Wexner Center educators, students will visit Ohio State's Byrd Polar Research Center, OSU's Aquatic Ecology Laboratory, Franklin County Municipal Landfill, and the Olentangy Wetlands Research Park, working with OSU

professors Ellen Mosley Thompson (Geography), W. Berry Lyons and Lonnie Thompson (Geological Sciences), William J. Mitsch (Natural Resources & Environmental Science), and Elisabeth Marshall (Ecology & Organismal Biology). The students will also be working with nationally known artist and OSU art professor Michael Mercil, visiting artist Edgar Heap of Birds, and Wexner Center Residency Award recipient and New York-based artist Zoe Leonard. New this year is a green architecture component with a visit to DesignGroup scheduled in March. Readings include Bruce Mau's *Massive Change* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx & Crake*.

Throughout the course, students will develop art projects relating to the environment, which will be on view in **an exhibition May 31–June 6** in the Wexner Center Performance Space (public reception May 31, 6–8 pm).

Wrote a past student, "I am coming away from this course with a greater understanding of the complexity of environmental issues as well as a working understanding of deadlines and exhibits. I feel that all of these things will help me greatly as not only a college student in an art-specific school but also as an environmentally conscious person."

## **SUPPORT**

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