

✦ ✦
The Richard Helzer's

✦ Bronze Pencil

Award Recipients

2026 ✦ ✦



Sean O'Neill

with well written thoughtful proposals, always submitted on time. He was awarded multiple scholarships including one to attend the Arrowmont School for the Crafts in Gatlinburg, TN for a summer workshop, and the Pulfrey Ceramics Scholarship. Sean worked on the Indigen-eyes Project with Dr. Woodcock Medicine-Horse, traveling to New Mexico to help interview prominent native artists, including Jean Quick-to-See-Smith. Sean served as a student ambassador for the College of Art and Architecture, leading tours for visiting prospective students and their families and assisting with CAA events.

Sean attended a summer workshop at the Bray on harvesting local materials. His fall semester was a focused intense period of studio production using local “Basin Creek” stoneware clay, the wood firing process, and electronic components to create sculpture and produce a strong body of work. Sean was also nominated to submit an application for the Windgate Undergraduate Fellowship, a national \$15000 award. Although he did not receive the award Sean used the opportunity to develop an idea and to craft a very strong proposal certain to serve him well in the future.

Sean O'Neill completed his BFA in F2025 and presented a strong thesis exhibition, capping off an impressive run of undergraduate study and achievement. During his time at MSU Sean was fully engaged in the program, always in the studio, always stepping up to help, and to take on leadership positions, including serving as President of the Ceramics Guild. Sean attended the national ceramics conference NCECA from 2024-26. Sean never missed an opportunity to apply for what was being offered,

-Josh DeWeese



Jack Schnepf

Since first beginning his studies, Jack Schnepf has proven himself time and again as an intrepid and dedicated student. Already coming to MSU with an impressive skillset as a painter, he diligently and with great sensitivity continued to refine his approach to traditional strategies of image making, while also seeking out ways he might adapt and transform themes of classical portraiture, landscape, and depictions of the natural world into relevant new contexts.

This led him to a collaborative effort and residency at MSU's Quantum Collaborative Research and Education (QCORE) facility, where he endeavored to translate the science and methodology of quantum technology into thoughtfully abstract contemporary art. Aside from his dynamic and ever-evolving practice, Jack was a stalwart presence in, and advocate for, the studio arts areas at the SoA. His experiences here have paved the way for a truly exciting career in the months and years to come.

-Rollin Beamish



Marin Waldo

During her entire tenure as a studio art major, Marin Waldo pursued her passion for landscape with a single-minded focus that bordered on obsession. Despite that clear motivation, and the obvious payoff it yielded in her thesis series, Marin also diligently explored and experimented with other media and aesthetics with a care and sensitivity that almost belied her chosen focus.

This commitment to her studies also made her an essential member of any student cohort of which she formed a part. Though I might personally miss those few, splendid abstract paintings she made in various classes, she'll undoubtedly be barnstorming the landscape scene of the Mountain West in no time flat.

-Rollin Beamish



Mariah-May Lucy

Mariah-May Lucy has been selected to receive the 2026 Richard Helzer Bronze Pencil Award for the Art Education area. Mariah was an excellent student finishing with a strong 3.88 GPA, finishing her degree in four years. Mariah was a model student in the ARTZ 332 Intermediate Ceramics, never missing class, and fully engaging in the program.

Mariah did her student teaching at Bozeman Senior High,

working with Pat Hoffman in the ceramics area who commented, “Mariah brings a genuine care and quiet confidence to her work, creating ceramics that feel both thoughtful and effortless. What stands out even more is the way she connects with her students—she helps them feel seen, capable, and inspired. Even at the start of her career, she carries a natural presence in the classroom that many teachers spend years growing into.”

Mariah received strong praise from her Art Education instructor Allison McGree who commented, “Mariah did exceptional work in Pat Hoffman's classroom — a calm strength that drew students in as a leader while also creating real ease in the room while they made art. She ran the classroom beautifully, built a strong relationship with her supervising teacher, and demonstrated genuine range as both artist and educator. Her multitasking, which is the daily reality of teaching, looked effortless because she executed it so well.”

-Josh DeWeese



Brynn Ryan

She isn't afraid to stare down the barrel of any project. Armed with her humor and grit, Brynn has the tenacity to not only take on any design challenge but transform simple briefs into outcomes that feel less like assignments and more like the fully fledged work of a boutique agency. On its face Brynn's portfolio and list of accomplishments have a veneer of polish that suggests effortless, but greatness is rarely achieved without struggle and that's the thing I admire most about Brynn, her ability to wrestle with creation. In illustration class she was always the first person to pick up a paintbrush and the last person to set it down. In Professional Studio I watched her pour everything into research and then steadfastly sit in the trenches with strategy until her Capstone was fully re-formed. I've seen her carry the weight of bridging design and business and watched her juggle countless projects with a deftness beyond her years. There is a quiet heroism to walking through the creative process and it has been a pleasure to witness Brynn win day in and day out. So, Brynn cheers to your dedication, daring, and wit... may this Bronze Penc

-Grace Washko

It is my honor to present this 2026 Bronze Pencil in Graphic Design to Brynn Ryan. The bronze pencil is of course an award that celebrates achievement in the arena of communication art. And while Brynn more than qualifies for recognition on accolades alone...after all, she is the Director of Graphic Design with AMA (American Marketing Association), the Creative Director for the AMA Case Competition team, and of course Graphic Designer and Brand Strategist for MSU's very own Black Stone Launchpad.

I believe that the mantle of the Bronze Pencil celebrates the more mercurial qualities of a truly excellent creative. Much like the cowboys that Brynn pulls inspiration from...



Tia Budish

Tia Budish is more than a designer! She is a talented photographer, metalsmith, and printmaker. A participant in the study abroad Italy Program, graduating with a Graphic Design BFA degree with honors. She has a cumulative GPA of 3.84 and been honored 7 times on the Dean's List, and is likely to earn an 8th this week. Leaning into the official university motto of "Mountains and Minds," it's common to find Tia working diligently on her well-traveled laptop, solving a creative project at the same time packing her favorite pair of pink Fisher skis for the next epic adventure.

Surpassing the MSU norm of being a regular at Bridger Bowl and Big Sky. Tia has transformed her mountain quests into a pilgrimage by skiing every month of the year for the past 150 months (12 ½ years). This means balancing school work and checking the boxes during the regular semester. Then conquering the late-season, unpredictable conditions without chairlift access, like St. Mary's Glacier at 11,200 feet in Colorado. In addition to successfully navigating the legendary 50-degree slopes of Rock Creek Headwall at Beartooth Pass.

All the while forging the two critical skill sets required for an exciting future and successful career as a creative in the outdoor industry. Congratulations to Tia Budish on being an outstanding senior and 2026 Bronze Pencil awardee.

-Jeffrey Conger



Emma Lackey is an exceptional graphic design senior whose impact spans athletics, leadership, and creative practice. A Division I student-athlete, Emma served on the MSU Spirit Squad from 2021–2025, including a term as Captain, while representing MSU at major events like Cat/Griz and March Madness games. She also contributed to campus life as Director of Letterpress for the Graphic Design Guild and as a three-year member of the Student Athlete Advisory Council, organizing service initiatives that strengthened community connections.

Emma Lackey

Emma worked as a graphic design intern for Bobcat Athletics, creating social media and game-day visuals. Her MSU journey reflects remarkable resilience transitioning from academic struggle to earning a 3.65 GPA and consistent honors in School of Art classes. Through leadership, creativity, and determination, Emma has built a body of work and service that exemplifies excellence both on and off campus.

Emma likes to refer to herself as a "printer" and this spring she has really started to embrace and share with others her continued love for the "dying art form" of letterpress and analog printing. She values traditional mediums, such as letterpress, printmaking, and bookbinding, and considers them the most fulfilling and irreplaceable, no matter how far technology advances.

Emma exemplifies how passion, resilience, and dedication to both craft and community can create a meaningful and inspiring design practice.

Congratulations to Emma Lackey the printer.

-William Culpepper



Precious Kicking Woman

Precious Kicking Woman brings a quiet strength and a generous heart to graphic design. Born and raised in Cut Bank, Montana, she carries her identity as a Native American artist into her work with care, purpose, and a sense of cultural representation. Her designs are not only visually thoughtful; they are made with intention, patience, and respect for the stories they hold. At Montana State University, Precious has built a strong foundation in typography, illustration,

branding, layout, digital media, and motion graphics. As a Graphic Design Intern at Montana PBS, she has contributed to broadcast and digital media projects, designed promotional materials within Montana PBS and PBS Kids brand guidelines, and created motion graphics and animated logos in After Effects. She has also earned President's List recognition and maintained outstanding academic performance. Precious's work reflects dedication, humility, and a sincere desire to bring meaning and positivity into every creative space.

-Minjee Jeon



William Gray

Will Gray has consistently demonstrated the qualities this honor represents - dedication, creativity, and a strong collaborative spirit. He shows up each day ready to engage, contribute, and elevate his work and the work of those around him. Beyond the classroom, Will has distinguished himself as Art Director for the MSU American Marketing Association, where he helped lead the 2026 National CASE Competition. He has also been an integral part of the MSU LaunchPad team; its director, Trevor Huffmaster, has repeatedly noted Will's enthusiasm, professionalism, and ability to deliver thoughtful design solutions.

Alongside his MSU work, Will took on many freelance projects supporting Montana-based businesses like The Trail Head in Missoula and entrepreneurs like Amaltheia Dairy in Bozeman. He was able to help build brands and deliver effective, real-world designs. Will values design as a tool for connecting people to opportunities and ideas that shape their futures. We know he will continue to produce work that strengthens communication, supports engagement, and brings meaningful initiatives to life. Congratulations, Will Gray, on the Bronze Pencil award. It is much deserved.

-Bruce Barnhart



Benjamin Kosel

Ben combined an historian's eye with a designer's formal analytical skill; the result was a thoughtfully observed and wonderfully engaging presentation. As a fellow traveler in Italy, Ben's presence was supportive, good-humored and fully present for his peers. His passion for knowledge is evident in everything he does -- in the careful thought he brings to his exam and papers, in the connections he draws across periods and traditions, and the genuine curiosity that drives him to look more closely. Beyond his intellectual gifts, Ben is simply a kind person, the sort of student who makes the environment around him better without ever seeking credit for it. This award reflects not only his academic excellence but the character he brings to everything he pursues, and we are proud to celebrate him today.

-Dr. Melissa Ragain

It is a true pleasure to recognize Ben Kosel with this Bronze Pencil today, especially since, when he was notified of the award, he emailed back saying he thought it was a mistake. It is not; he was chosen unanimously by the art history faculty. Though he may not be the loudest voice in the room, those who have had the privilege of knowing Ben understand that his quiet presence carries remarkable depth. The quality of his company was very much in evidence when Ben participated in the SOA Semester in Italy Spring 2025. For his on-site discussion and accompanying research paper of the sculpted relief panels of the Ara Pacis in Rome,
