

Application for Promotion to **Distinguished Professor**

CHARLES BENEKE
University of Akron
Myers School of Art
Professor of Art
Printmaking Area Coordinator
Assistant Director
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Peer Letters of Support

To navigate to individual letters click on names.

- **Nicole L. Hand**
Murray State University, Professor of Art, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
- **Melissa Haviland**
Ohio University, School of Art + Design, Professor, Chair of Printmaking, Director of Study, Honors Tutorial College Studio Art
- **Mark Hosford**
Vanderbilt University, Chair, Department of Art, Associate Professor of Art
- **Emmy Lingscheit**
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Art + Design, Associate Professor
- **Joseph Lupo**
West Virginia University, Professor of Art, Associate Chair, Graduate Studies Coordinator
- **Michelle Martin**
The University of Tulsa, The School of Art, Design and Art History, Professor of Art (Printmaking) and Director
- **Phyllis McGibbon**
Wellsley College, Elizabeth Christy Koph Professor of Art
- **Taryn McMahon**
Kent State University School of Art, Associate Professor of Studio Art, Studio Art Division Coordinator
- **Kathryn Polk**
Co-Owner L VIS Press
- **Jenny Schmid**
University of Minnesota Department of Art , Professor
- **Kevin Shook**
Birmingham-Southern College, Professor of Art
- **Tanja Softić**
University of Richmond, Tucker-Boatwright Professor of Art
- **Jillian L. Contreni Sokso**
Kent State University School of Art, Professor and Director



College of Humanities and Fine Arts

This letter of support is for Professor Charles Beneke's application for Distinguished Professor at the University of Akron. With over twenty-five years in higher education as a faculty member and administrator, I can't think of a more worthy candidate for this honor.

Professor Beneke is a dedicated professor and researcher. Over the past twenty years, the printmaking program at the University of Akron has produced excellent students who are well-versed in the technical side of printmaking and the conceptual and theoretical side of making art. The instruction they received from Professor Beneke is exceptional and reflective of the current field of printmaking. Professor Beneke is a rigorous, challenging professor who creates an energetic, inclusive, and engaging studio environment. He is excellent at working with a class and diversifying his instruction for individual student's needs. Professor Beneke is continually revamping the curriculum to meet the educational goals of his students and the program. His dedication during the pandemic, creating extensive online curriculum and videos so his students would continue to excel as we navigated an unprecedented time in higher education.

In 2012, I was a visiting artist at The University of Akron. I was honored to be invited to campus and be part of a visiting artist program that has published prints for many impressive and noteworthy contemporary printmakers. My time on campus was remarkable due to Professor Beneke's leadership and organization. Before this visit, I had met students from the University of Akron at printmaking conferences and was impressed by their work and passion for printmaking. However, my week on campus allowed me to work closely with the students, and I was not only impressed by their professionalism but also their technical knowledge and the quality assistants they were for the project. After the project was completed, Professor Beneke organized individual critiques with the advanced printmaking students, and I was impressed with the prints they were making and their ability to present the work. I left this experience with a deep appreciation for Professor Beneke's printmaking program, teaching philosophy, and classroom management.

In addition to working with Professor Beneke at the University of Akron, I have had the pleasure of attending multiple panels and exhibitions of his creative work at the Mid-America Print Conference and Southern Graphic Print Conferences. Professor Beneke has organized multiple panels and participated in a dozen more; each panel and presentation was excellent. Professor Beneke's depth of knowledge regarding teaching pedagogy, printmaking history, and studio research is remarkable. For over twenty-five years, Professor Beneke has contributed to the contemporary printmaking dialogue and elevated the field regarding teaching and research. Professor Beneke is an encouraging, collaborative, and dedicated leader. He has served on the Mid-America Print Council and Southern Graphic Print Council boards for multiple terms. While holding these positions, Professor Beneke worked tirelessly to elevate the organizations, committed to their growth and advocating for printmaking education. His leadership was exceptional and inspiring.

For over twenty-five years, Professor Beneke has created prints that are not only beautifully designed but rich with content and advocacy. In 2015, I saw his solo exhibition *Specter* at The Akron Art Museum, and this exhibition combined two and three-dimensional print media in a dynamic and cohesive exhibition. Professor Beneke has recently created three series of prints, *Unhappenings*, *Water Studies*, and *Note to Self*, that seamlessly move between design, color theory, and advocacy. The work is stunning visually and challenges the viewer to pause and reflect on one's relationship in society, inspiring hope and change. In addition to creating the work, he continued to expand his knowledge and completed a residency at The Tamarind Institute for

Lithography. This residency exemplifies Professor Benekes's dedication to his studio practice and commitment to expanding his knowledge to return to the classroom.

Professor Beneke is a professor and faculty member every university wishes to have. His unwavering dedication to teaching and research is remarkable and fully deserving of the title of Distinguished Professor. He has my highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicole L. Hand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nicole" and last name "Hand" clearly distinguishable.

Nicole L. Hand
Professor of Art
Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Murray State University



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March 20, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Professor Charles Beneke in support of his application for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor. Due to his strong reputation in the field of printmaking, I have been aware of Professor Beneke and his artistic work for close to two decades. I regularly see him and his artwork at print conferences. I have worked as an artist/printmaker and educator of printmaking at Ohio University for 20 years, where I am ranked as full professor and act as the chair of the printmaking area. This allows me to relate professionally to Professor Charles Beneke's accomplishments.

In 2016, Professor Charles Beneke invited me to have a solo exhibition at The Emily Davis Gallery at The University of Akron. It was the first time that Beneke and I worked together and was it was productive and interesting. I visited to assist in installation, give an artist talk, and meet with students. Professor Beneke and I were able to talk about printmaking, art, and life. I was especially excited to learn more about his process of hand screenprinting wallpaper, a process I regularly use in my own practice. Professor Beneke's design and printing practices for his installations such as, "Behold...Through the Concealed", involving wallpaper is unique and inspiring. His advice on printing on Tyvek, a rolled plastic material, allowed me to add this material to me and my students' repertoire. Many of my artworks since 2016 involve Tyvek and repeat printing. In 2017, I invited Professor Beneke to be a visiting artist at Ohio University, specifically to critique a group of students working with repeat print. Professor Beneke was generous with my students and offered a wealth of information.

The University of Akron states that the title of Distinguished Professor is an honor recognizing a career that demonstrates substantial professional accomplishments. Professor Charles Beneke deserves this promotion based on his record of exhibitions that proves him to be a prolific artist and exhibitor. Throughout his career, Beneke have been steadily creating and exhibiting his ambitious artistic work both in solo and group exhibitions. In his art practice, Beneke has produced prints and installations that are exquisitely executed and conceptually poignant. He has been a visiting artist at many universities and has done ample public presentations throughout the years. He regularly curates and participates in print portfolios, which is a practice at the heart of the field of printmaking. If one is just to glance at Professor Beneke's website, they would understand his dedication to making and his career as a visual artist.

The Myers School of Art's Distinguished Professor Guidelines detail that applicants must demonstrate that they have achieved a national profile as a pedagogue, artist/scholar, and contributor to the service of their field. Though I cannot speak to the full breath of Beneke's teaching career, my visits to The University of Akron in 2016 exposed me to his students. It was evident that they had a deep respect for Professor Beneke and were driven and resourceful due to their training with him. Over the years, I have also been able to meet his students at the printmaking conferences and they left similar impressions. Over the course of his 23-year career at UA, it is evident that he has provided a generous amount of service in the Myers School of Art and the larger university. His has regularly served as the Printmaking Area Coordinator and currently has undertaken administration as the School of Art Assistant Director. In addition, Beneke has served as President for both of our field's national organizations, Mid America Print Council and Southern Graphics Print Council, as well as in other officer roles. This service is felt when attending the conference over the years, Professor Beneke is connected and involved with the field printmaking at a high level. Professor

Beneke has served on the board of Curated Storefront and ART—Art Resources Transformations and the Morgan Conservatory, as well as offered community service in the visual arts to the Akron region in general.

I highly recommend Professor Charles Beneke for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor in The Myers School of Art at The University of Akron. From my experience, Professor Charles Beneke is ranked among the most reliable and innovative in the field of printmaking. He has shown evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order to the Myers School of Art, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Haviland', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Melissa Haviland
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March 15, 2024

To whom it may concern,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support for Charles Beneke towards the title of Distinguished Professor. I have had the privilege of knowing Charles for many years, especially through his years of service within the two most important national printmaking organizations: Southern Graphics Council International and Mid-America Print Council, as well as being a visiting artist at the University of Akron as part of the Myers School of Art's thINKeditions.

From the criteria I have been provided with, applicants must demonstrate that they have achieved a national profile as a pedagogue, artist/scholar, and contributor to the service of his/her field and will have shown evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order to the Myers School of Art, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron. With these criteria in mind, there can be no doubt that professor Beneke is most certainly deserving of the title of Distinguished Professor.

Charles and his art practice are well known and respected throughout the printmaking community. He has done an overwhelming amount of service to the field by serving on the boards of both largest national print organizations. Southern Graphics Council International and Mid-America Print Council are prestigious organizations that have become crucial in driving the most important professional and academic conversations within the field of print. As someone who has served on the board of SGCI previously, I can attest to how much time one must volunteer when serving in these roles. These organizations only survive due to the generous professionals who dedicate their time, ensuring the important mission of these organizations continue. Charles dedicated at least eight years of service to Southern Graphics Council International, with three of those as the President. Within Mid-America Print Council, he served at least five years, serving terms as both president and vice-president of the organization. He has without a doubt had a tremendous impact within the print community while in these many roles.

Despite the many years Charles gave service to national print organizations, he maintained an exceptional exhibition record, showing both nationally and internationally. His diverse exhibition record illustrates that he has national recognition. Of note is the fact that he also manages to exhibit widely internationally, showing in Spain, Brazil, Poland, Germany, Egypt, Australia, New Zealand, and India among others. He has kept had a good balance of solo and group exhibitions. In art, the jurying process often serves as the true litmus tests for proving impact in one's field. Being selected for exhibitions and portfolios by peers shows how one's work stands above others in your discipline. Here too, Charles has shown that his work is regularly recognized by peers. His work is regularly included in important national juried print exhibitions.

Perhaps unique to the print discipline, being included in juried print portfolios is very important. Often showcased in print conferences, these juried portfolios catalog who is important in contemporary print. Charles has had a very large presence in juried print portfolios being invited annually, showcasing his important voice in the field of print.

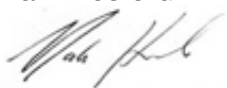
In 2014 I had the honor of being invited to the University of Akron as part of the Myers School of Art's thINKeditions. During my visit I was able to function in part as classroom observer. While there I witnessed first-hand professor Beneke's strength as a teacher. Not only was he a highly effective instructor in how he was delivering classroom material, but it was obvious that his students held him in the highest regard. Watching him with his students, I noticed how insightful and thoughtful he was with his comments. When I had short studio visits with his students, it was clear they felt a strong sense of belonging within the print area. The student work was of the highest caliber and the students felt very comfortable talking about their work. This atmosphere where student feel comfortable taking risks and being comfortable with feedback only happens when an instructor instills this culture in the classroom. Not long after my visit at the University of Akron, I ran into many of these same students at SGC International print conferences. The fact that so many of his students were attending print conferences was another testament to his strength at inspiring students to be a part of a larger print community.

It is clear from Professor Beneke's CV that his service has been exemplary. He has served multiple years on the faculty senate, served on many review committees for both the college and university, and has served for over a decade as printmaking area coordinator for the School of Art. There are an incredible number of invisible hours dedicated to running a print facility. Supplies need to be ordered regularly and equipment needs constant cleaning, updates, and repairs. I know first-hand from my visit that the print facilities at the Myers School of Art were exceptional due to Charles hard work and dedication. It should be noted that organizing and hosting regular visiting artists is a very time-consuming task. Charles organizes and hosts artists every year as part of thINKeditions and more. Through his dedication he is giving his students inspirational experiences they will not forget. Unlike a traditional visiting artist visit where there may only be a lecture, a visiting print artist takes more time and attention since they are creating an editioned print while visiting and working in the studio with students for many days in a row.

In 2022, Charles Beneke was awarded the Leadership in Print award as part of the 2022 Mid-America Print Council Conference at Kent State University. This award is a huge honor. It also perfectly illustrates how Professor Beneke is a tireless contributor to his field and has shown evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order. Considering all that he has accomplished and represented in his CV, there is no doubt that Charles Beneke is deserving of the title of Distinguished Professor.

Please do not hesitate further should you need to reach out to me further regarding this letter.

Sincerely,
Mark Hosford



Chair, Department of Art
Associate Professor of Art
Vanderbilt University



COLLEGE OF FINE & APPLIED ARTS

School of Art and Design
143 Art & Design Building, MC-590
Champaign, IL 61820-6924

Dear reviewers,

I am writing to share my experience as a visiting printmaker in the Myers School of Art's *thINKeditions* program, coordinated and hosted by Professor Charles Beneke. I was excited to receive Charles' invitation to be *thINKeditions*' 2018 visiting printmaker-in-residence, joining an impressive roster of nationally renowned printmakers who have been part of this program over the years. From March 14-16, 2018, I completed a new limited edition print in the Myers School of Art print studio, with the help and collaboration of students and faculty. I also presented a public lecture on my work and met with students for individual critiques of their own work.

I'm still amazed by what we were able to accomplish during these three intense days. The printmaking students who worked with me to print the edition were highly engaged and seemingly tireless. Charles himself was there helping every step of the way as well— anticipating needs, troubleshooting print issues, and rolling up his sleeves to help with inking when I needed to take a break. The atmosphere of this community of students, faculty, and visiting *thINKeditions* members who dropped by reflected a great rapport between its members. Going out for a fantastic dinner in Akron as a group, after our last long studio day, is a standout memory from my visit.

The individual work of the students with whom I met was thoughtful and technically well-executed, reflecting quality instruction and, no doubt, the positive impacts of spending time in the studio learning from a different visiting printmaker every spring semester. I know from my own experiences as a student how formative and important such encounters with professional artists are. Enabling students to watch and converse with established artists about how they approach and execute their work, and to hear how they speak about their concepts and research, are two invaluable benefits of a visiting artist program such as *thINKeditions*. The ongoing mentorship relationships that these intensive workshops can foster continue to benefit students throughout their future careers.

thINKeditions is an invaluable resource for UA and Northeast Ohio, and Charles is an excellent host, coordinator, and collaborator. This program is one strong component within his broad and well-documented service to the printmaking discipline. Should you need any additional information, feel free to contact me at lingsche@illinois.edu.

Sincerely,
Emmy

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmy Lingscheit', written in a cursive style.

Emmy Lingscheit
Associate Professor
School of Art + Design
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

February 22, 2024

Distinguished Professor Review Committee:

This letter is in full support of Professor Charles Beneke for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor. For the purposes of understanding my background, I will include a brief professional bio. I am currently the Associate Director, Printmaking Program Coordinator and Graduate Studies Coordinator of the School of Art and Design at West Virginia University. My work has been a part of over 150 different solo and group exhibitions, is included in various permanent collections including the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University, the Denver Art Museum, the Museum of Texas Tech University, the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, and the Spencer Museum of Art. I served on the Executive Board of SGC International from 2006-2012 and served as the president from 2008-2010. I have worked with Charles on several projects over the years and have been continually impressed with their consistent passion, dedication, and drive. Additionally, and maybe most importantly, I know Professor Beneke to be a good person who strives to do the right thing for their students, members of their community, and for the environment in every aspect of their lives.

Professor Charles Beneke's professional career shows a record of substantial professional accomplishments. Using the language of The Myers School of Art guidelines, I strongly believe that Charles Beneke has "achieved a national profile as a pedagogue, artist/scholar, and contributor to the service of his or her field and...(has) evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order to the Myers School of Art, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron."

A record of substantial accomplishments is evidenced by their work being included in 18 solo exhibitions and over 100 group exhibitions since 2002. Professor Beneke's prints are in permanent collections all over the world including the Akron Art Museum, La Biblioteca Nacional de España in Spain, The Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt, The Turner Print Museum in California, The Amity Foundation, and in various university collections around the country. Among an impressive list of honors and awards are a Leadership in Printmaking Award presented by the Mid America Print Council during the 2022 MAPC Conference and semifinalist for the Print Center 93rd International Competition in Philadelphia.

Also impressive is the list of organizations, conferences, and universities that have requested Professor Beneke's presence as an artist and academic, another sign of the awareness and recognition of their work, knowledge, and expertise. Recently, Professor Beneke has given presentations at the internationally recognized 2019 Guanlan Forum in China, Cleveland Institute of Art, multiple presentations at both SGC International and MAPC Conferences, Ohio University, Utah State University, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Birmingham Southern College in Alabama, and Millsaps College in Mississippi.

I would like to focus on three aspects to Professor Beneke's career; their recent acceptance into the 2021 Tamarind Institute Summer Workshop, their service to both SGC International and Mid America Print Council, and their organization of the annual thINKeditions visiting artist series. These specific accomplishments not only make them unequivocally qualified for the rank of Distinguished Professor, but also shows their dedication to their artistic career, to service for the betterment of their profession, and to the University of Akron Myers School of Art.

The Tamarind Institute is one of the premier lithography workshops in the world. Tamarind is dedicated to both their artistic mission, bringing world renowned artists into their workshop to create hi-end lithographic editions, and their educational mission. On this second point, since its inception in 1960, Tamarind has been credited for educating generations of lithographers throughout the world and

bringing a newfound level of appreciation and respect to fine art lithographic printing. Their educational programs, including their Summer Workshop, are highly competitive and sought after opportunities. Many printmakers apply for years before getting accepted. At a time when they could be resting on their laurels, Professor Beneke continues to advance their technical skills and knowledge by attending this workshop. Dedicating this time to learning from some of the best lithographic printers in the world is a clear indication of Professor Beneke's willingness to continue to challenge themselves professionally, which not only benefits their personal creative research but benefits Beneke's students as well.

Professor Beneke has an extraordinary amount of service to the two prominent printmaking organization in the United States; SGC International and the Mid America Print Council. While the 12 committee memberships to both organizations alone is an impressive showcase of their dedication to our profession, the fact that Beneke served as president of MAPC in 2006-08 and president of SGCI in 2018-20 is beyond admirable. It is also unprecedented, looking at the list of past presidents of both organizations confirms that Charles Beneke is the only person to be president of both SGCI and MAPC. I know first-hand the amount of time, effort, and stress that is involved with leading these organizations. Beneke's SGCI presidency also overlapped with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I can confidently say there are no words that can successfully describe the amount of stress and worry that navigating SGCI through this moment created. The number and importance of professional service responsibilities Professor Beneke has volunteered for is not only a clear indication of the level of commitment they have for our profession, but also the trust and respect our colleagues have for Charles.

Finally, since 2002, Professor Beneke has hosted 29 visiting artists, 12 participating in the thINKeditions visiting artist lecture series. A healthy and viable visiting artist program is a requirement for a successful program inside a school of art. Managing robust a visiting artist program, such as the one Beneke has created for their students, is no simple task. The amount of time and energy needed to organize these opportunities is evidence of a sincere level of dedication to the students enrolled in the University of Akron Myers School of Art.

With all this in mind, I strongly reiterate my support for Professor Charles Beneke. From my perspective, the consistency of their professional accomplishments, interest in engaging the community, and dedication to the betterment of their students makes Professor Beneke more than deserving of promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor. Their case is easy to defend as I have no doubt that Professor Beneke will continue to perform at a level of excellence.

Sincerely,



Joseph Lupo
Associate Director
Graduate Studies Coordinator
Professor of Art



March 12, 2024

To: Distinguished Professor Review Committee
Myers School of Art
The University of Akron
Folk Hall, 150 E Exchange St.
Akron, OH 44325

Re: Charles Beneke, candidate for Distinguished Professor

Dear Distinguished Professor Review Committee,

I am honored to write in support of Professor Charles Beneke, who is currently applying to be recognized as a Distinguished Professor in the Myers School of Art. I have had the pleasure of observing Mr. Beneke's career from a variety of perspectives for several years, and feel I am well placed to give an honest appraisal of his accomplishments. I met Mr. Beneke for the first time in 2014, when we were elected to serve on the Executive Board for Southern Graphics Council International, and during that time, we developed a cordial, professional relationship. In 2017, I was an invited artist for the Myers School of Art's thINK Editions visiting artist program, during which I worked with Mr. Beneke and his students to create an edition of prints. All of these interactions with Mr. Beneke have enabled me to speak to his accomplishments in regard to his creative practice, his teaching, and his service to the discipline of printmaking.

First, I would like to make a quick statement regarding my experience and credentials. I am currently a Professor of Art at The University of Tulsa, where I have taught courses in print media and drawing since 1997. Over the course of my career, I have had a great deal of experience in regard to evaluating candidates for research awards and tenure/promotion; I am currently serving a second term as voting member of the College of Arts and Sciences Committee on Tenure and Promotion, and in the past, I have chaired several departmental tenure/promotion review committees, served as an external evaluator for promotion and tenure cases at other institutions and have served on the University Research Award Committee. Furthermore, as dedicated teacher and an active artist committed to maintaining my studio practice, I am well aware of the challenges faculty members face when trying to balance the demands of research, teaching and service. I have had the opportunity to review Mr. Beneke's CV and other support materials, including the basic guidelines for Distinguished Professor at your institution; in my professional opinion, I feel Mr. Beneke's accomplishments more than fulfill the Myers School of Art institutional requirements for the recognition of Distinguished Professor.

Research:

As an active artist working within the same field as Mr. Beneke, I am familiar with current trends within the medium of printmaking and its applications. As a general rule, artists who are printmakers tend to be fairly active; most exhibit on a regular basis and attend conferences and/or workshops yearly. Even within the context of this active group of artists, Mr. Beneke stands out.

I first began to follow Mr. Beneke's artwork in 2005, when I saw his prints that were exhibited during the Southern Graphics Council International conference in Washington, D.C. Since that time, I have followed his career with interest, which has allowed me to watch his studio practice develop over the years. I have been especially impressed by the conceptual power and technical mastery of his work, much of which centers on themes of accumulation/consumption, memory and the impact of climate change on our world. I have shown his work to my own students because he creates work that is conceptually rigorous (yet accessible) and also technically well made, with every choice of material and mark carefully considered. It is also important to note that he is one of the few contemporary artists working in printmaking that has worked to push against the traditional boundaries of the medium; his installations (made with hand-printed materials as a major component) connect seamlessly with the prints he creates, almost as if the prints leap from their 2D form, into our physical space, and then return back to the page. This is extraordinarily difficult to execute successfully, and I appreciate the fact that all of his work is connected by common conceptual threads, no matter what form it takes.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Beneke has built an *outstanding* professional record. Since his arrival at the University of Akron in 2001, Mr. Beneke has exhibited his work in 97 juried/group exhibitions and 18 solo exhibits - including one international solo show in Spain and 10 solo exhibitions outside of the state of Ohio. This is in addition to the 28 exhibitions (25 group, 3 solo) he had been selected for prior to his being hired at the University of Akron. His record boasts both quantity *and* quality, with the vast majority of his exhibitions hosted by respected national and international venues. Furthermore, most of these exhibits were either nationally or internationally competitive juried exhibitions (such as the *Print Center's 93rd Annual International Competition*, *On/Off/Over the Edge: American Print Alliance Traveling Exhibition*, *Americas 2000*, and the Mid-America Print Council juried exhibitions); or highly sought-after invitational/curated exhibitions, such as *Encountering Our Indelible Mark* (exhibited as part of the IMPACT 10 conference in Spain), *Twenty Years of Marias Press* (Hilliard Art Museum in Louisiana), *Caring for the Commons* (California College of the Arts), *DI CARTA / Papermade Biennial* (Schio, Italy), and *Brand, Re-Brand* (exhibited as part of Philagrafika); or were significant international exhibitions focusing on prints or artist books, such as the *Monumental Ideas in Miniature Books* (exhibited at the Museo de la BNE in Madrid, Spain), *The New World: The Exquisite History Volume II* (Finland), and *Cultural Transport / Moving Targets* (exhibited as part of the IMPACT 4 international conference in Berlin, Germany). Many of these exhibitions are extremely competitive - with acceptance rates as low as less than 1% - or, were curated by nationally respected critics and artists working in printmaking media.

Outside of exhibitions, an artist's reputation can be measured by other professional activities such as invitations to be a visiting artist, citations in publications, presenting at conferences, curating exhibits and awards. Mr. Beneke has excelled in this aspect as well, having won numerous prizes and awards for his work, including being selected as a semi-finalist for the Print Center's 93rd International Competition (with an acceptance rate that year of .077%). Mr. Beneke receiving the Leadership in Printmaking Award from the Mid-America Print Council is also of note, as there are many talented, successful artists working in print media who have not received recognition from their peers at that level. Other professional accomplishments include having his work reproduced and/or featured in numerous exhibition catalogs and arts publications, chairing several conference panels, and being selected for competitive artist residencies at respected institutions (the residency at the Jyväskylä Center for Printmaking deserves special mention here). Furthermore, Mr. Beneke's work is included in several university and museum collections, including the Akron Art Museum, La Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid, Spain), The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Egypt), and the Turner Print Museum

(Chico, CA). Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention the many invitations Mr. Beneke has received from numerous institutions to be a visiting artist, many of which were R1 schools or institutions with well-regarded printmaking programs. There are too many to list here, but ones of note include American University in Cairo (Egypt), James Madison University, Murray State, University of West Virginia, Ohio University, Kent State University, The College of William and Mary, University of North Texas, and The University of Notre Dame.

For lack of better phrasing, Charles Beneke is the “real deal”; he has achieved more in the last 23 years than most professional artists accomplish in a life-long career. He is a completely engaged professional, dedicated to expanding his artistic practice conceptually and technically. I am confident that his reputation (already considerable) will only continue to grow.

Teaching:

While I cannot speak extensively about Mr. Beneke’s teaching, there are a few things I would like to point to in support of his application for Distinguished Professor. First, Mr. Beneke teaches a wide variety of courses that touch on several media areas, including drawing, design, book arts and print media. His ability to teach courses in several media areas is to be commended; not only is it akin to someone having expertise in multiple areas (e.g., an expert in Medieval and Baroque art) , but it also indicates that he is willing to teach what the students *need*, not just only offering courses in what he *wants* to teach. Second, his dedication to coordinating and hosting visiting artists as part of the thINKeditions program is to be commended; while this sort of endeavor is extremely consuming, he is more than aware of how visiting artist programs like this can have a profound impact on his students. Over the last several years, his students have had the opportunity to work with several well-known printmakers, including Nicole Hand, Janet Ballweg, Mark Hosford, Kathryn Polk, Jenny Schmid (just to name a few), giving them the opportunity to experience an artist’s creative practice on a more personal, in-depth level. When I was visiting artist at the University of Akron in 2017, I found Mr. Beneke to be a dedicated, thoughtful educator that seeks to fully engage his students, continually challenging them to push past their comfort zone. The students I worked with during my visit were highly competent and professional – which indicates they were taught by someone who takes the students’ educational experience seriously. Finally, his nomination for Outstanding Teacher / Mentor (2009) of first year students is further evidence that the students find him to be thoughtful, supportive and highly competent teacher; even though he was not selected as the recipient for this award, his nomination speaks volumes, especially at a large institution.

Service:

Service is a category that often does not get the recognition it should; it is unglamorous, and the effort required by faculty and staff to keep a department/university running does not make the same impact compared to achievements in research and teaching. However, the willingness of faculty to contribute their time and energy to these tasks is vital in ensuring that faculty, staff and students have a safe and inclusive working/learning environment. When an individual has an exceptional record of research and teaching *combined* with a high level of service contributions, it is indicative of a true professional who dedicated to the success of the department/institution, not just their own personal goals.

In regard to university and departmental service, Mr. Beneke has an exemplary record, having served on *numerous* committees and advisory bodies, including several that require “heavy lifting”. I am greatly impressed by the level of commitment he has demonstrated to the department, especially in regard to his serving as the printmaking area coordinator, participation in program review/assessment efforts, and serving on tenure and promotion committees - activities that, despite their importance, can be viewed by some as a burden. He has also served in administrative roles, including Associate Dean (2016-2017) and is currently serving Assistant Director; as someone who is currently serving as chair of my department, I know first-hand how much time and effort this requires – and that makes his research accomplishments seem even more impressive. His cv also demonstrates a sincere commitment to community service, whether it is serving as a board member for arts organizations or creating prints in support of local groups and events. All of these activities are evidence of Mr. Beneke’s commitment to contribute to the vibrancy of the Akron and campus communities.

Aside from his service to the department and institution, Mr. Beneke is regarded in the printmaking community as someone who willing to give a great deal of his time to support the discipline, as shown by him having served on the executive boards for two professional printmaking organizations, Southern Graphics Council International and the Med-America Print Council. In fact, he was elected to serve as President for both organizations over the course of his long career, evidence that he has a reputation for competence, respect and fairness. During the time we served on the SGCI Executive Board, I found him to be someone who actually took the responsibility of serving the profession very seriously (as opposed to just serving to get a line on his CV). He always advocated for what was best for the organization and was always trying to think of ways to support emerging artists and student members (which was much appreciated).

In summation, Mr. Beneke would be an asset to any institution and is very deserving of being recognized as a Distinguished Professor. His professional achievements in terms of research are even more impressive when one considers his teaching load and commitment to service activities. I feel that as Mr. Beneke’s career progresses, he will make even more significant contributions to the field of printmaking.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this letter, and please feel free to contact me at (918) 631-2736 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Michelle Martin, Professor of Art (Printmaking) and Director,
The School of Art, Design and Art History
The University of Tulsa

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

ART DEPARTMENT

1

March 24, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing in support of my colleague, Charles Beneke, who is under consideration for a Distinguished Professorship at the University of Akron. Professor Beneke is an outstanding visual artist and educator who has established himself as a leader in the expanded field of contemporary printmaking. Along the way, he has also proven to be an exemplary studio based colleague, mentor, and leader in higher education.

I've been aware of Professor Beneke's trajectory since the mid to late 1990's, from the East, to the West, and then to the heart of the Midwest, where he has been based for more than two decades. I was a guest artist speaker at the Myers School of Art in 2006 and observed the generous and supportive way that he engaged with his students and colleagues there. So it has not been a surprise to see how Professor Beneke has traveled through the ranks at the University of Akron, deepening the school's already strong printmaking legacy, and shouldering a host of administrative responsibilities in recent years. Given the immense challenges in higher education just now, it's been a pleasure to see postings of his intensive summer research at the Tamarind Institute in New Mexico and to glimpse his new print studio coming to fruition off the coast of Maine. I look forward to seeing how this newest place informs Beneke's art and his ongoing commitment to climate based issues.

I met Charles Beneke around the time he completed his graduate work at the University of Connecticut- Storrs. But I really started to take note of his depth and potential as an artist when he settled into his first tenure track post in Wyoming. Like the University of Akron position, that teaching job was initially based in Foundations but allowed him to cultivate dynamic curricular links to the Print and Graphic Design areas. In those early years, and then as he settled in Ohio, what stood out to me was Beneke's insightful voice at gatherings of the Mid America Print Council. His questions during panel discussions tended to be far more thought provoking than most, and his prints on exhibit were not only visually accomplished but also conceptually nuanced. Beneke seemed to me especially alert to the poetic aspects of printed matter and its legacy of collaborative dialogue and peer to peer exchange. Perhaps due to his liberal arts education or his background as a book designer, he clearly had a deep appreciation for the textual as well as material aspects of print culture.

Professor Beneke and I have shared many extended conversations at MAPC gatherings as well as annual meetings of the Southern Graphics Council International, which soon became the largest



WELLESLEY COLLEGE

ART DEPARTMENT

2

and most prominent professional organization for artists who print their own work. As you will have gleaned from his dossier, Charles Beneke has been a key contributor to the growth and success of both of these (national) organizations, serving as a board member in various capacities and eventually becoming president of each at pivotal moments. Print education, for developing printmakers, for the general public, and for young academics eager to challenge the status quo, has been central to the mission of both SGCI and MAPC. Beneke's effort to strengthen both of these artist-run organizations, and to provide a more coherent, professional and visible platform for print based artists in general has benefited far more artists than have studied with him formally.

In a recent interview with Laura Berman, for her online series, "Reflections on Color" Beneke took the opportunity to reflect, not only on color but also on the larger aspects of conducting oneself in the world as an artist centered in printmakings:

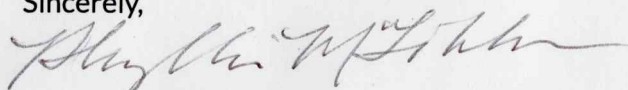
"The complexity of printmaking teaches invaluable organizational skills, the importance of continuous methodical and critical analysis, and pragmatic approach to art making—construct ideas; take them apart; build images through layers; meet surprise; problem-solve, know when to accept the unexpected, when to work with it, and when to change track; embrace the development of image through process; knowing when to say it's done."

Throughout his career, Charles Beneke has pursued a truly expansive approach to print media and has courted the unexpected. He works actively with graphic conventions but often in ways that defy the traditional limits of the page. He is an artist who constantly extends his reach, by building hybrid, mixed media installations on site, generating wallpaper patterns that morph in space, printing letterpress broadsides that defy quick reads, and most recently, by reacquainting himself with the alchemy of lithography.

No doubt you have a team of evaluators charged with commenting on Professor Beneke's work in greater detail, but I must say that I find his record of accomplishment to be impressive on all accounts. His willingness to extend himself in so many imaginative, generous ways has significantly benefited his students, his colleagues, and the field of printmaking as a whole.

Charles Beneke has more than earned the honor of a Distinguished Professorship in the Myers School of Art at the University of Akron. I support his nomination for this award wholeheartedly.

Sincerely,



Phyllis McGibbon

Elizabeth Christy Kopf Professor of Art





March 18, 2024

Dear Director Janice Troutman and the Tenure and Promotion Committee,

Please accept my enthusiastic support for the promotion of Professor Charles Beneke to the rank of Distinguished Professor at the University of Akron. I am honored to write this letter of support for his dossier.

I am an Associate Professor with tenure at Kent State University, a public institution with very high research activity. I have been teaching printmaking and overseeing the Print Media & Photography area for over 10 years. Since 2020, I have also served as the Studio Art Division Coordinator in the School of Art. My creative practice and teaching span alternative photographic processes, digital print processes, and traditional printmaking. I have exhibited my work in museums, university galleries, non-profit arts centers, and commercial galleries. In 2020, I co-chaired the Mid America Print Council (MAPC) online remote symposium, and in 2022 I co-chaired the MAPC biannual conference. In addition, I served on the board of SGC International as the Awards Coordinator from 2018-2020. These leadership positions have given me an in-depth understanding of the current field in printmaking, and I am in a strong position to speak to Professor Beneke's contributions to the field.

I have come to know Professor Beneke from our mutual activities in printmaking, mostly through conferences and exhibitions. I first met Professor Beneke in 2013 when we were both included in the MAPC member's exhibition at the McDonough Museum juried by Anita Jung. He then invited me as a visiting artist at the University of Akron when I was hired at Kent State in 2013. In 2014, I invited him to serve on a panel I chaired at the MAPC conference in Detroit. I also served with him on the Awards Committee for SGC International from 2016-2018 and then on the board when he was President of the organization from 2018-2020.

Professor Beneke has served as President of both of our field's major national/international organizations, MAPC and SGC International. He is the only artist and scholar to have the honor and responsibility of leading both organizations, which are the largest and most critical to the field of printmaking in North America. He was elected to these positions by a majority vote of members of the organizations. Leading these organizations involves hard work in planning the field's largest conferences, overseeing finances, and organizing exhibitions, among other important responsibilities. In my opinion, due to the nature of this work and its impact on the field, it should be considered as a marker of excellence in both research/creative activity and service.

It should also be noted that as President of SGC International, he steered the organization through the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic. He had spent 2+ years planning the organization's first conference to be held in Puerto Rico in April 2020, and had to make the

School of Art

heartbreaking, but necessary, decision to postpone the conference. That required navigating the legalities of contracts that had to be renegotiated and communicating effectively with the members of the organization. That conference has been rescheduled for 2025 and it is a testament to Professor Beneke's leadership that the organization endured through that difficult time.

When I was asked to chair the 2020 national MAPC Conference (which was postponed to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic) I put together a planning committee of regional leaders in the field including colleagues from Kent State University, the University of Akron, the Cleveland Institute of Art, Zygote Press, and the Morgan Conservatory. Professor Beneke did not serve on this committee because he was already organizing the other major conference in our field that year through SGC International. At one of our earliest meetings, while discussing the conference awards, the MAPC planning committee emphatically and unanimously felt that we must honor Professor Beneke for his unprecedented impact on the field. We decided to honor him with a "Leadership in Printmaking Award" for his significant contributions to the field regionally and nationally.

Professor Beneke has also showed his work in solo presentations at esteemed national venues including West Virginia University Gallery and the Akron Art Museum, among others. His work has been included in many group juried and invitational exhibitions nationally and internationally at prestigious institutions. The most significant institution that has showcased his work is the Print Center, Philadelphia, PA, which is one of the most prominent galleries in the field of printmaking. He has also been invited to serve as a panelist and visiting artist at prominent institutions and conferences across the country.

In addition to his research/creative activity and service nationally, he has demonstrated significant commitment to the community at the University of Akron and the arts community in the region. At the University of Akron, he has served as Assistant Director, Graduate Coordinator, Associate Dean of Academics for the Graduate College, and a member of Faculty Senate. In the region, he has served as a board member of the Morgan Conservatory in Cleveland and Curated Storefront in Akron. The Morgan Conservatory and Curated Storefront are some of the most exciting and active arts organizations in our region.

In summary, it is my opinion that Professor Beneke has established himself as a nationally recognized leader in the field of printmaking. He has contributed a great deal to the vitality of the arts community and printmaking discipline regionally and nationally. He has a demonstrated record of research/creative activity. He clearly cares about his students and strives to provide them with a rigorous and contemporary education in printmaking. His record of service to the Myers School of Art, University of Akron, the regional arts community, and his field nationally, is excellent. The University of Akron is very fortunate to have Professor Beneke and he has my highest level of support for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Taryn McMahon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Taryn" and last name "McMahon" clearly distinguishable.

Taryn McMahon
Associate Professor of Studio Art
Studio Art Division Coordinator
School of Art
Kent State University
tmcmaho5@kent.edu
330-672-2839

KATHRYN POLK

Co-Owner L VIS Press

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to offer this letter in support of Charles Beneke's consideration for application for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor at The University of Akron. I first met Charles Beneke during a Southern Graphics Council International Conference where he was serving on the SGCI Awards Committee.

Based on the recent work posted on his website, there is a theme of nature through the eye of a geometric construct, a compliment to many of Charles' previous installation works. I have always admired his understanding color and the power of color to change the work.

In addition to his teaching position at The University of Akron, Charles Beneke has been a major participant in the printmaking community throughout his career. From leadership positions to actual participation as an artist, Charles has been an active member of the most prestigious printmaking organizations such as MAPC, IPCNY, Boston Printmakers and SGCI.

In 2016, I was invited to be a visiting artist to The University of Akron. During a week of presentations, critiques, lectures and demonstrations it was quite apparent that the University print department was a thriving group of young artists. Charles was an inspiring teacher who extended career guidance to graduating seniors as well as technical support to all students working in the print shop. He had created an incredible environment for students to express their ideas and concepts. I found myself talking about his classes to faculty at other universities well after I left The University of Akron. That visit to The UofA print department gave me a keen sense of Charles Beneke's devotion to his students, the local art community and making his own work.

In conclusion, I would like to give my highest endorsement of Charles Beneke. I consider him to be an exceptional artist/teacher with a strong work ethic. He is one of those rare artists who is quite successful as a full-time practicing artist, a teacher and an explorer of new innovations in printmaking. Charles Beneke sets a high standard for all professional artists who practice what they teach.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Polk

polkonechair@gmail.com

13359 East Hillview Lane, Solsberry, Indiana, 47459



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

March 20, 2024

Dear Committee Members,

I write to support Professor Charles Beneke's application for recognition as Distinguished Professor for his contributions to Myers School of Art, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron. As an artist and Professor in the field of Printmaking, I consider Charles Beneke to have gone above and beyond in his teaching, research, and service. As I look across his c.v. and creative research and consider his engagement in the greater field, it is clear that he is fully deserving of this prestigious title.

Charles Beneke has 23 years of service and continues to be active. He is nationally recognized for his leadership, creative research, and contribution to the field. His artwork is in more than 20 museum and university collections, with an impressive record of exhibitions. Beyond this, his dynamic activity reflects a generosity of engagement that stands out from other artist educators at this point in their careers- the number of visiting artists he has hosted, panels he has chaired, visits he has undertaken, and lectures given shows he has been fully engaged in the community in exceptional ways.

Hosting print artists and being a visiting artist is a valuable way in which information is communicated in our field, which is both technical and communal. The advanced craft and artist choices that are involved when making fine art prints are best taught in person- there are details and processes that students can only learn by participating in the making of an edition. These labor-intensive visits are so beneficial to students understanding their own work and being prepared to continue in the field.

That said, these visits require extra time from the host to arrange travel and materials, schedule students to help and find funding and publicize events- and as such, not every academic pursues this activity. As a guest artist to Myers School of Art in 2015, I saw firsthand how Charles Beneke hosts artists so perfectly, welcomes us to the school and connects us to students, allowing us to produce an edition of prints in the studio because everything else is taken care of. I also witnessed firsthand how Professor Beneke is so connected to his students and honestly cares about their trajectory and, as such, puts in so many extra hours to be sure everyone had a great experience in the context of this unique hands-on learning opportunity.

Professor Beneke is also fully engaged as a leader, both at University of Akron as Associate Dean and Assistant Director and in the greater printmaking field- from being President of our largest and most recognized print association, the Southern Graphics Council to receiving a 2022 Leadership in Printmaking Award at the Mid-America Print Council Biennial Conference. Charles Beneke has stepped up to service in exemplary ways that many would not- as the time to continue to do creative research and take on these responsibilities is frequently at odds. It is clear

that he believes in this level of service and that his leadership has been thoughtful and energetic, judging by his promotion to more and more responsibility in all the organizations he has participated in.

Beneke's creative work reflect his generosity and concern by addressing climate crisis and natural phenomenon, both in print and installation. Ambitious, technically excellent, and experimental in form, his work expands on print processes to address important societal issues without excluding himself from implication. In the same way, he expresses his desire for the designation of Distinguished Professor to support and mentor others. He continues to be dedicated to service out of generosity, not for the status of the title- and sees the ways in which the power of achievement can help an individual give back to the communities they have worked hard to be a part of. His energy for this model of participation is truly inspiring.

In closing, I offer my full support of Professor Beneke to receive the title of Distinguished Professor. He has built a program as an educator that cares about and engages students, and he has extended that far beyond the classroom in his creative work, leadership, and active participation in the greater community. He has achieved the national recognition required for this distinction, but beyond that- he has done so with kindness, energy and conscientiousness that stands out as exceptional in the most meaningful of ways. Please feel free to contact me if you need anything more.

All the Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Schmid', with a stylized, cursive script.

Professor Jenny Schmid
Department of Art
University of Minnesota
jrschmid@umn.edu

March 17, 2024

To: Members of the Committee on Promotion to Distinguished Professor,
The University of Akron

From: Kevin Shook, Professor of Art at Birmingham-Southern College

Re: Promotion of Charles Beneke to Distinguished Professor

I am privileged to write this letter supporting Professor Charles Beneke's candidacy for promotion to Distinguished Professor. I first met Charles in 2001, when I served as a representative on the Student Advisory Council to the Director of Art at the Myers School of Art. The printmaking community is close-knit, and I have been in contact with Charles since leaving Akron in 2002. He is an accomplished artist, exhibiting nationally and internationally. Charles' art incorporates contemporary social and political issues, creating a visual representation that is powerful emotionally and conceptually. He is an active member of the printmaking community, serving in multiple national organizations. His pedagogical commitment to printmaking creates an engaging environment for his students. These attributes demonstrate why he is an excellent candidate for promotion to Distinguished Professor.

"Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. I try to act in that gap between the two."
Robert Rauschenberg

We do not create art in a vacuum. Art reflects life experiences and communicates to the viewer on a personal level. Charles' creative methodology is thoughtfully researched and executed beautifully. The artwork connects with his audience and engages them visually and conceptually. I have had the privilege to work with Charles on various projects. The most recent was 2019, when Charles was a visiting artist at Birmingham-Southern College (BSC). He spent the four-day visit building an installation that filled our 1,500-square-foot gallery. The finished installation, *Flash Point*, merged print media and sculpture and challenged the audience to contemplate how we react to the problems of our creation. This print installation reflects life and humanity's social responsibilities. Charles' exhibition record over the past eight years is impressive. He has had several solo and group invitational exhibitions. His devotion to the creative process is inspirational to his colleagues and students. Charles never wavers in his commitment to produce artwork that challenges his audience to ask questions of themselves or world views.

I knew Charles was an excellent educator, as evidenced by the several students attending printmaking conferences. As a visiting artist at The University of Akron with my collaborator Jillian Sokso, his students assisted with our printing project. I observed Charles teaching his

class and admired his ability to engage the students. He shared artists that resonated with them, connecting the students to printmaking. I immediately incorporated this technique when I returned to my studio classroom. Charles displayed his passion for teaching art during his visit to BSC. He worked with several student volunteers as he built his installation and allowed the students to collaborate in creating *Flash Point*. Charles' pedagogical approach instills his passion for creating with his students and those around him. This was proven when a national organization, the Mid-America Print Council, awarded Charles the Leadership in Printmaking Award at their Biennial Conference *Power of Print* in 2022.

Charles' contribution to the field of printmaking is extensive. He has served in multiple levels of leadership in the two largest national printmaking organizations, Southern Graphics Council International (SGCI) and Mid-America Print Council (MAPC). His role ranged from Member-at-Large to becoming President of both organizations, MAPC from 2008-10 and SGCI 2018-20. This level of dedication and service is in addition to his responsibilities to The University of Akron. I see a direct correlation between Charles' work in these organizations and his success as an educator and artist.

In closing, Charles Beneke is a prolific artist, dedicated educator, and scholar in his field. His contributions to the printmaking community are invaluable in representing The University of Akron. For these reasons, I strongly recommend his promotion to Distinguished Professor.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Shook', written over a light-colored rectangular background.

Kevin Shook
Professor of Art
Birmingham-Southern College

March 19, 2024

Dear University of Akron Colleagues,

It is my absolute honor to serve as an external reference for Professor Charles Beneke's application for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor at the University of Akron. I have known Charles since 2005, when we both were invited to take part in exhibition of American prints and related conference at the Cairo University in Egypt, curated by Karen Kunc, a doyenne of American printmaking who has recently retired from the University of Nebraska. Since that trip with a group of eight other printmakers, we have stayed in regular touch, collaborated on a couple of exchange portfolios and I have been fortunate to visit your exceptional print program at AU as a visiting artist and take part in print project with Charles and his students, staying in touch with several alumni who have gone on to their own successful careers in art. Charles has been very visible and active in our national and international printmaking organizations and initiatives, his artistic output in print and print installation is astonishingly rich, demonstrating the depth of knowledge of theory and practice of art and print in particular, technical and formal knowledge and versatility and thoughtful development of his career as an artist in academia.

Having worked with his students, I can attest that the quality of his teaching is beyond excellent: his students are prepared for the professional life (whether in printmaking, art in general or any career path they might take) by his example of thorough research, tenacious and passionate studio practice and thoughtful distribution of his work, such as exhibitions, publications and events. The care and dedication to his students' art education and professional development is obvious and so is the students' respect for Charles. It has been a real pleasure to work in such positive, thoughtful and industrious studio environment.

As an artist, Charles is at the height of his powers and showing no signs of settling down. He consistently produces outstanding work in print and print installation, his work has been shown widely, both nationally and internationally. His CV speaks eloquently of high regard his colleagues around the country have for Charles' work—the sheer number of university-affiliated galleries and art centers where he has shown in solo or group exhibitions testifies to the centrality of his work to the contemporary print practice and thought. I would like to highlight his participation in The Print Center's 93rd Annual International Competition in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, probably the oldest and most prestigious competition in our field in the U.S. and that he was a semifinalist for The First Prize. It has been exhilarating to follow Charles' work after I have been introduced to it in 2005. He has a way of fluidly moving from exploration of interior states of mind to addressing threats to the whole world, such as climate

change, war and social injustice, with light touch, often with sense of humor, always philosophical. In installations *Flash Point* 2019 and *Disturbance* 2017 and in the exquisite series of *Disruption* print series from 2017, Charles seems to address all of our political and climate-related anxieties: entropic, unfolding shapes, reminiscent of clouds and smoke waft and engulf the keeling and collapsing wall stud structures, which makes one think of the collapsing frameworks of our political discourse and other threats we are unwilling to acknowledge and grapple with. The installations and prints are seductive in its sheer beauty, but the titles such as *New Normal*, snap us back into the world we all inhabit and worry over. By contrast, print series *Notes to Self* and two recent series of gorgeous photolithographs, *Unhappenings* and *Water Studies* from 2023, attend to personal reflection and meditative power of both images and their making, and subtle connections between thought, language and image. Yet the bodies of work, as diverse as they are, all carry Charles's unique contemplative and formal imprint. The words that come to my mind when I think of Charles Beneke's work are *thoughtful, whip-smart, funny, profound, generous*. I can't think of a better set of qualities in an artist, particularly the one that teaches at the college level.

Charles has given more service to his professional community than anyone I know. Even a cursory look at his CV will reveal his dedication to the advancement of profession. He has served as President (and in many other key leadership roles) of both Mid-America Print Council and Southern Graphics Council International, two foremost national and (in the case of SGCI International) international print organizations. The fact that he was elected by his peers to serve in these roles is a clear and formidable testament to the respect he has among his peers, such as myself. Anyone in the world of academic printmaking will not only recognize his name but will recall it with a smile of appreciation for his inspiring work, his collaborative spirit and his leadership. I will let his colleagues at the University of Akron and Myers School of Art speak about his service to the Department and the School but I will say this: it is astonishing to see the number of leadership roles he has worked in and service assignments he has undertaken. Myers School of Art is very fortunate to have a colleague and artist of Charles Beneke's caliber, integrity and warmth. I know that I am proud to have this inspiring artist and a wonderful human being for a colleague.

If there is anything relevant I have not addressed in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at tsoftic@richmond.edu or 1-804-513-1465.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tanja Softić', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tanja Softić (she/her)

Tucker-Boatwright Professor of Art, University of Richmond



March 25, 2024

To whom it may concern:

It is a pleasure to write in support of Professor Charles Beneke in his application for the promotion to Distinguished Professor, and cite his extensive and accomplished CV as evidence of his qualifications and merit. The University of Akron Collective Bargaining Agreement states that *"the title of Distinguished Professor is an honor recognizing a career that demonstrates substantial professional accomplishments."* The Myers School of Art's Distinguished Professor Guidelines detail that *"Applicants must demonstrate that they have achieved a national profile as a pedagogue, artist/scholar, and contributor to the service of their field and will have shown evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order to the Myers School of Art, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron."* In this letter I will outline all the ways in which Professor Beneke meets and exceeds the criteria for the promotion to Distinguished Professor.

I have known Professor Beneke for approximately 15 years as a disciplinary colleague in printmaking and reproducible media. We are both members of the discipline's primary professional and educational organizations, Southern Graphics Council International and Mid America Print Council, and have long teaching careers in the discipline. I had the opportunity to get to know Professor Beneke better when he was an invited visiting artist at Houghton College (now Houghton University) in 2013, where I was then on the studio faculty and chair of the department of art and design. Beneke has also served as a juror for Kent State University's Thomas Little Prize for Excellence in Printmaking, an award given annually by the school I now direct. In 2022, he received the Leadership in Printmaking Award at the Power of Print, Mid-America Print Council Biennial Conference here at Kent State University. In addition, Professor Beneke was a full time faculty member in the Myers School of Art when I was a visiting artist there in 2012.

Throughout our association and professional relationship, I have come to hold Professor Beneke in the highest esteem. He is a dedicated teacher, scholar and artist who invests in the arts and cultivates engagement at his home university and community and abroad. During his time as a visiting artist at Houghton University, Professor Beneke engaged the student community with gusto, providing important feedback with in-studio visits with students, as well as delivering a powerful and influential lecture on his practice to the community. During the year of his visit, he was voted as one of the top three visiting artists which gave the most meaningful and memorable talk which students noted they learned the most from.

I have observed unfaltering dedication by Professor Beneke to the visual arts in higher education. His exemplary service to the profession of both university faculty member and academic administrator, as well as a deeply competitive and accomplished career as a visual artist meet and exceed highest expectations. Beneke has sustained an accomplished and competitive research agenda for over 20 years, showing significant contributions and engagement within his discipline in the form of public presentations, artist in residence, publications as author, presentations, and exhibitions in regional, national and international venues.

Professor Beneke's service to the profession is exemplary. He's held positions ranging from board member to president, to marketing committee chair within the professional organizations Southern Graphics Council International, Mid-America Print Council, Curated Storefront, and the Morgan Art of Papermaking Conservatory and Educational Foundation. In addition, Beneke has invested in the community of the greater Akron and Cleveland region with numerous public events and engagement activities over the last two decades.

University service is another area in which Beneke excels- his activity includes numerous committee service across the school, college, and University- again, ranging from student success committees all the way to Graduate School Coordinator, and Associate Dean of Academics, and spanning work in assessment, health and safety, policy, curriculum development, tenure and promotion, and search committee service and leadership. In my thirteen plus years of serving as a department chair or school director, I have rarely seen such a diverse and dedicated service record.

It's clear to me that Professor Beneke meets and exceeds the University of Akron and Myers School of Art's criteria for the rank of Distinguished Professor. His widely published and cited research based studio practice, commitment to and achievement as an educator, and service to the profession and community all mark him as a distinguished and highly valued member of your institution, deserving of this particular honor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Sokso', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jillian L. Contreni Sokso, M.F.A.
Professor and Director
School of Art
Kent State University