

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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330.414.6687

Service Letters of Support

To navigate to individual letters click on names.

- **Kate McQuillen**
Visual Artist, M.F.A., former SGC International Program Coordinator
- **Nicole Pietrantonio**
Printmaker, 2016-18 President SGC International
- **Valerie Dibble**
Kennesaw State University, Professor of Art, Emeritus, Retired Coordinator of the Printmaking Department
- **Nydia Fernaández-Toledo**
Cultural Consultant, Viejo San Juan, Puerto Rico
- **Anna Nicholson**
Taller 34 Inc., President. Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Rio Piedras, Facultad de Humanidades, Departamento de Bellas Artes, Professor.
- **Richard Rogers**
Curated Storefront, Executive Director

Kate McQuillen

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March 13th, 2024

To the Committee,

It is my pleasure to contribute a letter of support for the dossier of Charles Beneke. From 2016-2021, I worked as Program Coordinator for Southern Graphics Council International, the nation's largest professional membership organization for educators and practitioners in the field of printmaking. For the first three years, I interacted with Charles on a monthly basis while he served as Member-at-Large and Chair of the Awards Committee. For the final two years, I worked directly under Charles on a daily basis while he served as the organization's President.

The field of printmaking is a unique place in which one considers the meaning of mass production, distribution, and accessibility within the context of fine art. In the academic community, the sharing of knowledge of techniques that date back hundreds of years is crucial to the advancement of the field. Outside of academia, it is a medium where people create community spaces where resources such as printing presses can be shared. In the marketplace, the medium is accessibly-priced, and employs strategies of supply and demand to bring more art to more people. The field is inherently communal and relies heavily on group learning, volunteerism, and egalitarian principles.

I have been a member of this community since the late 1990s, and I currently teach printmaking at Rhode Island School of Design, Massachusetts College of Art & Design, Parsons School of Design, and SUNY Purchase. I'm represented by Massey Klein Gallery in New York City, and my artwork has been exhibited nationally at museums, galleries, and art fairs. I've worked as a fine art printer for leading contemporary artists such as Charline von Heyl and Swoon; served as President of the Chicago Printers Guild, a grassroots organization providing support to printmakers in the Chicago area; and was a curator at Super Dutchess, an artist-run micro-gallery on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Throughout my time in the community, I've been fortunate to meet many exceptional professors, arts professionals, artists, art historians, and students of printmaking. Charles comes to mind at the very top of this list as someone who has dedicated himself fully to the medium and those who work within it.

While working for Charles, he and the board of SCGI sought out new and innovative ways for members of the printmaking community to share knowledge, support each other, and forge new connections. Charles was a natural leader for this role, as he is someone who deeply values mentorship, learning from peers, and, as they say, "paying it forward." One major project that Charles and I worked on was a total redesign of the organization's website, including creating an internal social media platform for members to exchange information such as news of upcoming events in the print community, techniques for printing, and teaching assignments that were especially effective. Into this App we built robust member profiles,

which operated in a database system that allowed for various forms of digital interaction between members such as direct messaging and tagging in conference panel events.

We also had the honor of planning SGCI's first conference to be held in a different culture. Titled *Puertográfico: Islands are Vessels Anchored at Sea*, the conference was to be located in San Juan, Puerto Rico in April of 2020. From the very beginning of our planning, Charles recognized the need create a conference that would acknowledge and respect the island's complex relationship to the United States, and examine that relationship through the lens of colonialism. Through listening to members within the community, he understood that the organization should hire a cultural liaison to help guide us in our role there as guests. Throughout our planning, Charles remained committed to creating space to understand Puerto Rico's unique identity, history, and how this has been reflected in Puerto Rican culture through artmaking and specifically printmaking.

We pursued a number of concrete initiatives to address these concerns, first by providing educational materials to our membership about the island's culture and politics, and then by creating strategies for developing lasting relationships with local artists. These included "Here's the Salsa," a weekly announcement highlighting various aspects of Puerto Rican music, art, history, cuisine, and geography; the "Let's Leave a Press in Puerto Rico" project, in which we helped run a crowdfunding campaign to donate a new printing press to the University of Puerto Rico Rio Piedras; a "Print Shop Registry," in which our members could sign up to donate and bring materials to local printshops; and a set of community service opportunities for members who chose to volunteer during their time in San Juan.

In addition to his volunteer work and academic duties, Charles also produces exceptionally thoughtful, technically advanced, and visually compelling artwork. He seamlessly merges photography, drawing, text, and graphic symbols into what I can describe as captivating snapshots of mental states. Filled with surprising, beautiful, and meaningful leaps of visual logic, the works have the ability to transport the viewer emotionally and analytically. Over the years, I have watched his work constantly evolve, always questioning and exploring issues that are of concern to him in the current moment. Charles's reputation as an artist is clearly evidenced in his extensive list of national and international group exhibitions at highly-esteemed museums, universities, and galleries, and I'm certain that his deep connection to his work as an artist is a central part of what drives him as an educator and community member.

As President of SGCI, Charles created an extremely positive and productive work environment for me, one in which honesty, respectfulness, mindfulness, and consideration for others was at the forefront. During our time working together it was clear to me that Charles receives joy not just from work, but from working collectively, with others, on projects larger than what just one person can achieve. It is this spirit that exemplifies Charles's ability to galvanize others to grow collectively, and makes him such a valuable asset to our printmaking community.

Sincerely,



Kate McQuillen
Visual Artist, M.F.A

Nicole Pietrantonì

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR CHARLES BENEKE – DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR

March 20, 2024

Dear University of Akron Faculty & Staff,

It is with great pleasure that I provide this letter for Charles Beneke for promotion to the rank of Distinguished Professor. I enthusiastically recommend Charles for Distinguished Professor and know that this honor is befitting to his level of commitment, service, and scholarship in the field of printmaking. In accordance with the Myers School of Art's Distinguished Professor Guidelines, Charles demonstrates a career of substantial and outstanding accomplishments. He is a dynamic, nationally recognized artist and educator who has served at the highest levels of leadership in the field of printmaking in the United States.

Charles clearly demonstrates an outstanding commitment to service in the field of printmaking, far beyond anything I've seen among our peers in the field. Charles has served on numerous committees and boards across the country, most notably as President for *both* the Mid-America Print Council and SGC International, the largest organization dedicated to printmaking in North America. It was through SGC International that I first met Charles, when I was an Associate Professor of Art at Whitman College and serving as President of SGC International from 2016-18. I quickly saw that Charles was one of the most dedicated and service-oriented artists I've ever met. He was always eager to step-up for projects, problem solve through difficult board conversations, and exuded

a steadfast commitment to excellence and equity for the organization. As Charles stepped into the role of President from 2018-20, I saw him navigate some of SGCI's most difficult moments with grace, empathy, and vision. As President, Charles listened deeply to the membership and always maintained a deep commitment to equity, inclusion, and diversity. Charles' tenure as SGCI President transformed the organization – he overhauled the board's operating procedures, completely redesigned the website, and built lasting relationships with print artists from Puerto Rico for an SGCI conference in Puerto Rico for 2025. I cannot overstate how much labor and love Charles has given to SGCI and the printmaking community, both nationally and internationally through his leadership roles. In acknowledgment of his work, Charles was honored with the Leadership in Printmaking Award from the Mid-America Print Council in 2022, a national recognition of his deep investment in the field of printmaking.

Alongside Charles' service, he is an incredibly dedicated artist with an outstanding exhibition record and ever-evolving portfolio of print-based work that pushes the boundaries of our field. Not only is the volume of Charles' creative output impressive, but the reach of his work in exhibitions, portfolios, and collections around the world is significant. Charles' artwork has been in esteemed national and international group exhibitions including venues such as the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Hillard Art Museum, and the IMPACT International Printmaking Conference in Santander, Spain. His work is in a large number of curated print portfolios and international collections including La Biblioteca Nacional de Espana in Madrid, The Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria, Egypt, and The Corcoran College of Art and Design, in Washington, DC. Recent solo exhibitions at *Flash Point* at Birmingham Southern College and *In Absence of Reason* at West Virginia University, transform prints into objects and turn shadows into images that implicate the viewer as part of these systems. In much of Charles' work, including his recent *Water Studies*, I see an artist who is consistently working to understand and reveal one's place in relationship to the world and one another. Combining scientific research on climate change with observation and meditation, his work is prescient and foreboding, while remaining poetic and infused with hope.

Charles' art practice is driven by a desire to learn, connect, and share his incredible knowledge of printmaking with his community. In 2022, Charles attended the Tamarind Institute, the preeminent studio for lithography education in the United States. His work with Tamarind has inspired a new series of lithographs and also influences his teaching of lithography. Alongside preserving these traditional methods of printmaking education, Charles delivers a contemporary approach to print pedagogy for his students. From special topics in book arts to posters and zines, Charles' own deep knowledge of the field of printmaking is an outstanding resource for the Myers School of Art students. Alongside his teaching at the University of Akron, Charles serves as a mentor for both print students and faculty in the printmaking community, and is frequently invited as a visiting artist at institutions across the country. Charles is a generous artist and mentor who is consistently giving back to the printmaking community.

Again, I absolutely support Charles' nomination to the rank of Distinguished Professor. Charles is a nationally recognized leader in the field of printmaking and his immense accomplishments are befitting of the honor of Distinguished Professor. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide more information about my support of Charles. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicole Pietrantonio". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "N".

Nicole Pietrantonio



15 Feb 2024

Dear Myers School of Art, the Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, and The University of Akron.

Re: Charles Beneke – candidate for The Myers School of Art’s Distinguished Professor

I am honored to be able to share my observations and interactions with Charles Beneke over the years and the positive effect he has had on students and the print world in general. It is my understanding that applicants for the Distinguished Professor award must demonstrate that they have achieved a national profile as a pedagogue, artist/scholar, and contributor to the service of his or her field and will have shown evidence of continuing contributions of the highest order. When I read the requirements, I knew that Charles Beneke is the perfect candidate to receive this award. I will share some experiences I have had with him over the years that clarifies my conviction.

I have known Charles Beneke personally for over 10 years. I knew of him and his reputation for much longer than that. He is a very renowned printmaker, teacher, and artist. Over the years I would encounter him and his students at the Southern Graphics Council International (SGCI) conference. His students were always involved, engaged, informed and very skilled. I served on the SGCI board with him from 2013 – 2020. His commitment and leadership were pivotal to this international organization’s success. He created scholarships and awards for students and always championed their participation. During the pandemic he created an opportunity called Lock Down Quarantine printmaking. This was a call to artist to share how artists were managing their printmaking while on lock down. My students were quite invigorated by this opportunity, and they entered their prints and “how to” information. This is only one of innumerable activities that Charles spearheads as an educator artist/scholar. The impact of this single call to artists was tremendous and impactful across a huge swath of artists around the globe. The artists that were formerly feeling very isolated were drawn into a lively interactive experience with other artists. Charles included colleagues to jury the entries and then posted and disseminated all the beautiful prints and how to information. This is just one example.

As you review his extensive resume you can see a long term, ongoing active engagement of contributing to the education and sharing of print knowledge and pedagogy. He has significant and impressive exhibition record of national and international venues, and he also has been incredibly active in sharing knowledge and engaging other artists in critical dialogue. The list of panels and presentation spans several decades of substantial and noteworthy exchanges This active engagement with the print community has added much valued vibrancy

to the quality of the conference experience for all involved – students through professionals. He has not only participated in the conferences, but he has been sought out for a variety of leadership positions in the top printmaking organizations. He was selected for President in both Mid America Print Council (MAPC) and SGCI. I do not think any other artist/scholar has been chosen for such important leadership service in both organizations. He also held many other positions on the boards of these organizations. The impact of this all-encompassing and valued service cannot be overly stated. In conjunction with the two primary print organizations, he is active in many other significant groups – Boston Printmakers for one and The International Print Center is another.

In conjunction with this service, his teaching career has spanned almost 30 years. He is revered as a proficient, knowledgeable, and compassionate teacher. The students from his program are very well trained and ready for their life outside of college. He shares his methodology freely with colleagues and is sought out for presentations and panels. He regularly hosts visiting artists which not only give his students and colleagues valuable exposure to new ideas but also mentors the guest artist. He knows the value of engaging others actively in the learning experience.

I have been a university print professor for 30 years. I have been honored to work with Charles and have often looked to him for advice and consultation. I have observed his tenacious and passionate work on boards and committees. I have been enriched by his panels and presentations. I have always encouraged my students to attend anything Charles is presenting as I know they will leave more informed and inspired. A review of his curriculum vitae shows clear evidence that demonstrates significant achievement in pedagogy, as an artist/scholar, and numerous contributions to the service of his field. He is a valued and sought after member of the print community and continues to make contributions of the highest order to the printmaking community on a national and international level.

It is with pleasure that I give my highest recommendation for Charles Beneke to receive the Distinguished Professor award. He is an exceptional candidate and most worthy.

Best,



Valerie Dibble
Professor of Art, Emeritus
Retired Coordinator of the Printmaking Department
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, Georgia

3/1/2024

Attn: Distinguished Professor Committee
Myers School of Art
University of Akron

Dear Members of the Committee

As a longtime resident of Akron with extensive engagement in the visual arts community I am offering enthusiastic support of Professor Beneke's candidacy for distinguished professor status.

I first met Charles while serving as a trustee of the Akron Art Museum where his work is part of the permanent collection. Since then I've experienced his deep intellectual capacity for inspiring success in the arts. His tireless devotion to the community is apparent in projects like: Posters for Planned Parenthood, design and production of donor gift cards for Grace House, and THINKeditions supporting the printmaking curriculum at Myers school.

Charles's work has been recognized beyond Akron. He has served as president of the Mid America Print Council, and Southern Graphics Council International, and has an expansive record of exhibitions across the US, as well as Spain, Egypt and Brazil.

I have not taken any of his classes, but I do know that he routinely turns out printmakers like River Bircher, Sarah Ellis and Paul Wosnicki who go on to distinguish themselves with careers in the arts.

Charles has served as a trustee since 2018 for the Curated Storefront, a local organization I direct that is dedicated to bringing dynamism to the streets through public art installations in downtown Akron. His deep subject knowledge and creativity is invaluable in helping us set themes, select artists, and guide the organization. He produced a memorable large scale installation for one of our windows at the corner of Market and Main Streets in 2016 without asking for compensation.

In summary I can't stress enough Charles's role in raising the quality of the arts and education to the community, elevating the level of student achievement, and community experience in the arts. His actions and achievements fit the distinguished professor criteria in all regards.

Sincerely



Richard S Rogers
Executive Director
Curated Storefront

www.curatedstorefront.org



15 march 2024
San Juan, Puerto Rico

It is with tremendous enthusiasm that I write on behalf of Charles Beneke who I fully support for The Myers School of Art's Distinguished Professor. I met Charles in 2015 at the SGCI Conference at Knoxville, Tennessee in that opportunity both of us were serving as Member at large on the Executive Board of the organization. We worked together on a voluntary basis with lots of energy to the endeavor to keep printmaking alive and vital. On those days the organization agglutinated more than 1,200 printmakers members. I remember seeing Charles as a young professor, he had the ability to find an intimate connection with his students to empathize and help drive their pursuits. I could see the admiration in the students' eyes walking by his side, using the same vest outfit on at the conference. Thru the years I saw Charles develop more important roles, like the Award Committee Member were he had the capacity to choose the people that really had impact on others, and later, as President of the organization, he engaged himself with renewed energy, the rich infusion of ideas and sights on the whole organization. Charles deserves this award immensely. His teaching and dedication to curriculum development, community building, global and local represents decades of dedication. I have seen Charles Beneke committed to create engaging and challenging artwork and exhibits in esteemed national and international venues. It is clear that Charles is seriously dedicated and fully committed to contribute to a better future, helping others achieve their aspirations.

Anna Nicholson
Chair 2020 SGCI San Juan Conference (Suspended by the 2019 pandemia)

Taller 34 Inc President
Professor
Universidad de Puerto Rico
Recinto de Rio Piedras
Facultad de Humanidades
Departamento de Bellas Artes

17 March 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

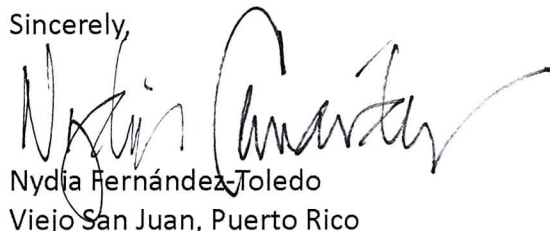
I am a cultural consultant in Puerto Rico. All throughout 2019 I had the pleasure of working for and with Mr. Charles Beneke as he presided over the not-for-profit organization Southern Graphic Council International, an organization holding an annual national conference of members for over fifty years. Mr. Beneke vowed to put the international part of the name into effect by bringing the conference to Puerto Rico—culturally outside of the US—and by making sure that the work done to achieve it would result in fostering a true cultural exchange.

Having worked for over thirty years, first in the field of advertising for the large corporate world and then cultural projects, I had experienced first-hand the general tendency to push for transposing foreign views, concepts and practices by means of translating them into Spanish and/or finding the more local ways to express them exercised by many organizations in the United States. That rarely works and it often takes a long and costly tour through failure for most to understand that culture is a more complex entity.

It took me one meeting with Mr. Beneke to discover an insightful intellectual with whom to communicate openly about how to create a proper working platform for that first SGCI conference abroad. He took this task seriously and with the utmost respect for Puerto Rico. I was amazed at all the pertinent questions he asked from day one. He would not have his organization take our country as background scenery for a typical conference. Together we created a conference program of new parameters for SGCI, one where one culture would learn from the other way beyond the scope of printing techniques and imagery. We had the misfortune of having to cancel the conference at the onset of the pandemic. And, when he left the presidency of SGCI, Puerto Rico lost the chance of hosting the event on fair terms.

Summing up, Charles Beneke is wonderful to work with on projects requiring vision, dedication, respect, openness, humanity and accountability. For everything else, just read his résumé.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nydia Fernández-Toledo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nydia Fernández-Toledo
Viejo San Juan, Puerto Rico