

Veteran art professor leaves to become dean at Rhode Island School of Design

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E. Jessie Shefrin, who has taught printmaking and integrated electronic arts at the School of Art & Design at Alfred University for 28 years, will become dean of Graduate Studies at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in August. Shefrin, who received her BFA degree from Alfred University in 1970 and her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of New Mexico. She returned to Alfred University as an assistant professor of printmaking in 1976, and is now professor of print and digital media. She was among the first at Alfred University to see the potential impact of the digital age on traditional printmaking. With Joseph Scheer, another AU alumnus and professor of printmaking, and Peer Bode, professor of video, she founded Alfred University's Institute for Electronic Arts in 1997. The IEA has garnered more than a million dollars worth of equipment and grants to allow students, faculty and visiting artists to explore new media. Additionally, the Institute for Electronic Arts was a catalyst for creation of a new Master of Fine Arts program in electronic integrated arts at AU. Shefrin is currently chair of the Division of Expanded Media and for the MFA program in electronic integrated arts. Her appointment as a dean at RISD is a "remarkable and wonderful opportunity" for Shefrin, said Ted Morgan, acting dean of the School of Art & Design, and a long-time colleague. "I began both my artistic and teaching careers at Alfred," said Shefrin. "I will leave grateful for having worked with dedicated and talented students who have taught me all I know about teaching; colleagues whose patience, vision and courage have been extraordinary in shaping possibility into reality; and staff who are, simply put, the best there is." Shefrin said it has been "a very real privilege" to be a member of the faculty at the School of Art & Design at Alfred University. "I was a student of and have taught alongside many of Alfred's distinguished artists and teachers, including John Wood, Robert Turner, Daniel Rhodes, Ted Randall, Val Cushing, and Bill Parry. She twice won an Excellence in Teaching Award from Alfred University and received the State University of New York Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2002. Praise for Shefrin's ability as a teacher Ann Hamilton, one of the best-known artists in the U.S. today, wrote about Shefrin, "In 1984, I was Jessie Shefrin's student. The experience changed my life. I can't say exactly what it was we did in class or what Jessie spoke of. What changed wasn't a sudden 'eureka' kind of recognition, it was something slower and quieter than that, something deeper than the momentary. In her way of being present to us as young students, to herself as an artist and a teacher, came for me a slow accumulation of recognitions, of the responsibility of art, to ourselves as social and as private selves, to each other as peers. It was in working with Jessie that I stepped out of 'picturing relationships,' and into understanding that 'making' is a way of being in the world. In Jessie, teaching and making and doing were all of one thing. To be witness and participant in that was a gift that altered my own course." Shefrin has also taught or been an artist-in-residence at several places, including Cite des Arts in Paris, Santa Barbara College, the Experimental Television Center in Oswego, NY, Anderson Ranch in Aspen, CO, the Haystack Mountain School in Deer Isle, ME, the Penland School of Crafts in Penland, NC, and the John Michael Kohler Center in Sheboygan, WI. As an artist, Shefrin's work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and abroad, including Shanghai and Beijing in the People's Republic of China, and in Osnabruck, Germany. Her work is included in *Real Time Shifts*, a limited edition collaborative artists' book to be published by Bayer Corp., AGFA Division; *Open Source: Digital Media Arts*, published in Beijing, China, in 2001; *Mantic Ecstasy: Digital Image and Video Art*, also published in Beijing, China, in 2001; *European Media Art Festival*, published in Osnabruck, Germany, in 1998; and *The Best of Printmaking: An International Collection* by Lynne Allen and Phillis McGiggan, published by Rockport Publishers in 1997. Shefrin's artist's book, *Connections: Project/Connexus* is included in the collections of The Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Museum and the Guggenheim Museum, all in New York City. Her work is found in the museums and private collections throughout the United States. Shefrin is the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including an individual award from the New York Council on the Arts and a Best of Show award from the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester.