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Three Institute Students Win 2007 Vision Awards for Entrepreneurial Thinking

Three graduating Fiber and Material Studies majors from The Cleveland Institute of Art were named in the top ten of the 2007 Vision Entrepreneurship Competition held in early April in Cleveland. Beth Whalley, Meredith Cowden and Brittany Ruccella were honored from a pool of 75 entrants from Case Western Reserve University, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland State University, and The Cleveland Institute of Art who exemplified entrepreneurial thinking and the use of technology in their ideas.

Whalley and Cowden teamed up on an idea of establishing a dye house in Cleveland. The business would also sell fabrics, wholesale and retail, and serve as a teaching facility where people can dye their own fabrics using plant and animal sources. A component of the competition was the use of environmentally friendly processes and materials. "The great thing about the Fibers and Material Studies department at the Institute is that there's a great atmosphere, friendly people, small classes and a growing number of us using green processes and materials in our work," Cowden said.

"We want to help Cleveland; there's so much 'green' stuff starting to happen that we'd like to stay, be a part of it and help see it through," Whalley added.

Ruccella received her award after pitching a concept focused on clothing that is made from natural, organic material and dyed naturally. "I started making environmentally friendly clothing after reading William McDonough and Michael Braungart's book *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Make Things*. This book motivated me to make sustainable clothing, so I started working with recycled materials. I would buy used clothing from the thrift store and deconstruct it then make new outfits/dresses. Then I started using organic, natural fabrics after studying in England and taking textile classes there. I really enjoyed designing the textiles and the hands-on experience. That is when I decided I wanted to make some of the textiles as well as using recycled materials. The Fibers Department at the Institute was a great place to develop my ideas," Ruccella said. A Cleveland native, she is receiving her bachelor of fine arts degree for an environmentally friendly clothing line, an endeavor that she would like to continue working on after graduation.

Proposals were judged by a panel of successful business people and academics based on a 60-second presentation proving the creativity, feasibility, marketability and sustainability of the projects. The winners will be formally awarded on May 4th at Cuyahoga Community College Corporate College East.

Top Photograph: Brittany Ruccella

Bottom Photograph: Beth Whalley, Brittany Ruccella, Meredith Cowden



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