



## ■ As a Digital Arts Center, Asheville Is Cool!

The Asheville area has a long history of innovation in the arts, dating back to the Bauhaus movement and the innovations of Black Mountain College. Over the past decade, visualization wizards, graphic and interactive designers, film producers, animators, performance artists, game developers and others who apply technology to convey concepts, knowledge or stories have been streaming to Asheville. They are putting their skills to work in advertising, scientific visualization, education, software development, computer art and other exciting endeavors, drawn by the talent they see here, the refreshing and energizing level of collaboration, and everything that makes Asheville, well — Asheville.

### Counting Asheville's Assets Requires Most of Your Digits

Digital artists are making Asheville and the surrounding area a truly happening place. Many assets beckon them here:

- The Media Arts Project ([www.themap.org](http://www.themap.org)) is an initiative that gathers and showcases digital artists in the region. The MAP has sparked phenomenal collaboration within Asheville's media arts community, and it has formed a bridge for artists to connect with the region's science, education and business communities.
- The Applied Visualization Lab is a collaboration between public and private interests to bring together and leverage advancements in geographical information systems, data visualization, education technology, multimedia production, interactive computer graphics and immersive display environments.
- Asheville has significant climate data assets, and the combination of climate and digital arts expertise is creating powerful decision tools. The Applied Visualization Lab recently demonstrated its expertise on a global stage at the 5th International Symposium on Digital Earth. Inside a portable geodome visualization environment, world leaders from the business, academic and government sectors experienced a unique animation of the effect of weather, development and land use through the story of how a storm moves through Western North Carolina.
- The Multimedia Arts and Sciences program at UNC Asheville ([www.mmas.unca.edu](http://www.mmas.unca.edu)) is grooming gifted digital artists, and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College ([www.abtech.edu](http://www.abtech.edu)) offers North Carolina's first associate degree program in digital media.
- A high-capacity fiber optic network that provides advanced telecommunications infrastructure throughout the region is made possible by ERC Broadband ([www.ercbroadband.org](http://www.ercbroadband.org)) and a number of public/private partnerships.
- A trained and talented digital media workforce is in place and highly motivated to work and play in Asheville.
- Meet the Geeks, a group dedicated to the growth and development of the IT sector in the region, provides support.

### The MAP

The Media Arts Project is an organization of artists, professionals, students and enthusiasts that has done a great deal to organize and harness the momentum around media arts in and around Asheville. The MAP cultivates innovative arts and technology, providing outreach, professional development, education and exhibition programming. It administers a grant fund for media artists working in or based out of Western North Carolina, and it also serves as a beacon and guide for newcomers on the Asheville media arts scene.

## Applied Visualization Lab

Digital artists working with visualization tools can make the invisible visible. At the Applied Visualization Lab, the plan is to convert mountains of data from diverse databases into pictures that help policymakers make scientifically informed decisions about planning and development, adaption to climate change and a host of other issues. By facilitating collaboration between scientists, engineers, media artists, entrepreneurs and policy makers, the Applied Visualization Lab will create effective visualization tools and techniques to address the world's most pressing economic and environmental challenges.

One of the lab's partners, the Renaissance Computing Institute (RENCI) at UNC Asheville is focused on developing tools for environmentally-oriented disaster planning and response in Western North Carolina. By cultivating the resources of all of its partners, the Lab will enable the region to become a primary supplier of products that will enable communities worldwide to use visualization to solve problems and adapt to change.

The vision for the Applied Visualization Lab has been the driving force behind the Applied Visualization Symposium, now in its fourth year and attracting a national audience of scientists and artists.

## Asheville Hosts Unusual Creative Festival

In Spring 2009, Asheville will be home to Asheville HATCHfest, a new annual festival that showcases some of the world best creative artists in film, fashion, music, architecture, design, multimedia, writing, journalism and photography. These top professionals will come to Asheville to mentor up-and-comers in each of the disciplines. Stay tuned for details!

## Hatching New Digital Artists at the Area's Institutes of Higher Learning

Multimedia Arts and Sciences students at UNC Asheville are creating impressive works in 2D animation, 3D animation, stop motion animation, digital imaging and prints, interactive and web applications, and video and audio. The program's home within a highly regarded liberal arts institution helps make it special. In addition to acquiring technology skills, students learn how to think, be creative, express themselves and become well-rounded citizens as well as wonderful digital artists.

Offering North Carolina's first associate's degree in digital media, Asheville/Buncombe Technical Community College (A-B Tech) is training future digital media technicians who will turn data into information the public can understand and use.

## Preview of Coming Attractions — A Digital Media Center Is in the Works

Now Asheville is working to create a state-of-the-art facility that will send media arts and technologies from the southeastern United States onto the international stage. The planned digital media center will serve as a catalyst that stimulates cutting edge research and experimentation and fosters collaboration between private, public and educational interests.

## Head to the Mountains

For digital artists who desire both a collaborative environment that creates sparks and a superior quality of life, Asheville is a very cool place to be. Asheville consistently tops many Best Places to Live lists, and it has also been recognized by *Forbes* and others as one of the top metros for business, careers, and being an entrepreneur. Creativity and technology are having a fine time together in Asheville, and you don't want to miss the fun and the challenge.

## About the Asheville HUB

Through the Asheville HUB, a collaborative effort of public, educational and private organizations, Asheville and Buncombe County, NC, are pursuing specific strategies that will strengthen economic vitality in six clusters by building on the region's unique assets. The many organizations and individuals that make up the Asheville HUB's Technology Cluster are working to establish the aforementioned digital media center, to bring more government and private meteorological organizations to Western North Carolina, and to fully realize the tremendous promise of the Technology Commercialization Center at A-B-Tech.

For more information about the Asheville HUB, contact Dave Brown at [brown@wfu.edu](mailto:brown@wfu.edu), or visit [www.ashevillehub.com](http://www.ashevillehub.com).