

Art History and Studio Art

“Cornell’s art faculty have a real dedication to their students. The Block Plan allows students and professors to set up international courses, individualized tutorials, and internships, depending on the needs of the student.”

Ellen Hoobler, Assistant Professor of Art History

Cornell College offers majors in Art History and Studio Art, with numerous options for independent studies to tailor an education to each student’s interests. The art department has a twofold approach to art education: it teaches students to make art and respond to art. Its faculty teach art principles that apply to any media and will not go out of date. Its lessons are broad, they run deep, and they will last a lifetime. Cornell art and art history students become tomorrow’s leaders as artists, educators, architects, curators, lawyers, production supervisors, and art administrators. They are articulate and creative, they can read analytically, write with clarity, and communicate verbally.

The art history faculty presents a broad variety of topics within art history. Topics include the arts and architecture of Antiquity in the Mediterranean, in pre-Columbian America, in the Renaissance and Baroque Italy, and in native North America, as well as Modern and Postmodern art. These more local topics are supplemented by courses addressing the global arts of West Africa, as well as Islamic and Latin American art and architecture. Art history students have particularly rich opportunities for off-campus experiences, with study-abroad programs regularly conducted in Mexico and Italy. These courses are supplemented by those that also address more local topics like African American art and American Indian art. This breadth is an advantage as graduate schools and employers increasingly demonstrate a preference for broad undergraduate coursework that addresses cross-cultural experiences.

BENEFITS OF ONE COURSE AT A TIME

The One Course At A Time curriculum provides our art history and studio art majors unparalleled focus on their work, and the ability to get the experience of what it is like to work as an art historian or artist. Classes frequently take daylong field trips to the Chicago Art Institute and the Des Moines Art Center. If an appropriate exhibition is on display, it would not be unusual for classes to visit the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis or the Milwaukee Museum of Art. One Course makes these types of field trips possible when a semester plan would not.

Art historians can learn the challenges of mounting exhibitions addressing any number of cultures and topics through real examples. Students in the African Art class were assigned to read selected articles about the history of collecting and displaying African art. Then the class visited the display of African art at the Art Institute of Chicago and compared the installation to that of the Western European and North American art. That evening, students listened to how the curator of the African and Native American art collections at the Detroit Institute of Art reorganized their exhibition spaces. Because of the flexibility of One Course At A Time, this class, in two days, gained a better understanding of the display of African art, with specific examples from written research, interviews, and on-site observations.

Studio art classes address a wide variety of media that extends beyond photography, sculpture, drawing, and painting. Popular classes include collage and assemblage, installation, performance art, and video. Ceramics classes engage students in utilitarian design and casting, along with more standard slab construction and standard modeling. The sculpture lessons often include 3D digital design processes.

Faculty Bios & Courses

SUSANNAH BIONDO-GEMMELL

Assistant Professor of Art
Teaches courses in 3-D studio basics, ceramics, sculpture, casting, and drawing. Her studio interests include ceramic material experimentation and investigation of the ceramic firing process. Recent exhibitions include shows at the Archie Bray Foundation, the TAG Gallery, the San Diego Museum of the Living Artist, and the Lux Center for the Arts. M.F.A., New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University; B.F.A., Washington University.

ELLEN MARIE HOOBLER

Assistant Professor of Art History
Teaches courses in art history. She is fluent in Spanish and is an avid world traveler. Her current research project deals with artworks as a tool of diplomacy and cultural interchange between Mexico and the United States in the 1930s. In 2014 she was named one of NerdScholar’s “40 professors under 40” for her support of undergraduates. Before Cornell, she taught at Columbia University, worked for the art auction houses of Sotheby’s and Christie’s in New York, and led art-focused tours in Mexico. Ph.D., M.A., M.Phil., Columbia University; B.A., Wellesley College.

CHRISTINA MORRIS PENN-GOETSCH

Professor of Art History
Teaches courses in art history and is committed to teaching the love of art through the examination of material culture from various peoples and periods. Her classroom teaching is supplemented by formal papers presented nationally and internationally, as well as curated exhibitions. Much of her research focuses on gender studies and the art and architecture of early modern Europe, as well as questions of identity in contemporary art. She regularly leads trips to the Eternal City and was a study leader for Smithsonian Journey tours to Sicily and Southern Italy in 2013-14. Ph.D. and M.A., University of Iowa; B.A., University of Virginia.



Studio artists work in a space that is devoted to their class, meaning they can leave out their paints or other supplies during the entire Block. Faculty often assign 24-hour McWethy building passes to art majors, and even occasionally to studio class members, so that they can return at any time of the day or night to work on their projects.

CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

The Senior Thesis project is a yearlong project where students engage in sustained research in art history or sustained creative work. Art historians are expected to make an original contribution to the discipline through a senior paper, public presentation, and oral defense. Senior studio art majors receive their own studio spaces and put on senior thesis exhibitions consisting of entirely fresh bodies of work in the mediums of their choice. Studio majors propose their exhibitions before the department faculty, mount the exhibitions, and advertise and defend their shows in front of the art and art history professors.

FACILITIES

The Art Department has exclusive use of McWethy Hall, which features large, up-to-date classrooms, a darkroom, wet room, carpentry shop, and ceramics studio. McWethy Hall is also home to the Peter Paul Luce Gallery, which hosts major exhibitions and senior thesis shows. An annex provides space for a computerized kiln and a foundry, and all senior art majors enjoy private studios with secure 24-hour access as they prepare their senior thesis exhibitions.

ART AWARDS

Art awards range from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Portfolios of 5 to 15 pieces of work must be postmarked by Nov. 1 or within one month of applying to Cornell if after Nov. 1. They may be submitted via a ZeeMee portfolio link (zeemee.com), as email attachments, as a PowerPoint, on a CD, DVD, flash drive, or as original work.

INTERNSHIPS

Recent majors have completed internships at the National Museum of American History, Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Mexican Museum in Los Angeles, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, Philbrook Museum in Tulsa, Puerto Rican Museum of Art, Rochester Art Center, and Russian Icon Museum in Boston.

AFTER CORNELL

ALUMNI CAREERS

Academic outreach coordinator, Academy of Art University, San Francisco, California (Class of 2015)

Gallery assistant, Douglas Dawson Gallery, Chicago, Illinois (Class of 2013)

Youth assessment coordinator, Anchorage Youth Development Coalition, Anchorage, Alaska (Class of 2013)

Marketing director, Mind Over Matter studio Method, Chesterton, Indiana (Class of 2013)

Sales associate, Carré d'artistes. Sedona, Arizona (Class of 2012)

Assistant manager, Goodwill Industries of Western Missouri and Eastern Kansas, Kansas City, Missouri (Class of 2012)

Sexual assault advocate, Riverview Center; rural technical assistance specialist, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Des Moines, Iowa (Class of 2012)

Representative, Christie's Auction House; programs coordinator, Photography Department, Art Institute of Chicago, (Class of 2011)

Exhibition development coordinator, Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, Oklahoma, (Class of 2010)

 See the Cornell College Department of Art and Art History on Facebook for more updates.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Although some students choose to enter the job market right after completion of an undergraduate degree, entrance into a graduate or professional school program is particularly common to art history majors.

STUDIO ART:

M.Arch. student, Washington University, St. Louis (Class of 2015)

M.Arch., Rensselaer Polytechnic, Troy, New York (Class of 2014)

M.F.A. student, Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, Georgia (Class of 2013)

M.F.A. student, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan (Class of 2012)

M.F.A. student, Maryland Institute of the College of Art, Baltimore, Maryland (Class of 2012)

ART HISTORY:

M.A. student, Fashion Institute of New York, New York City (Class of 2016)

M.A. student, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Class of 2016)

M.A. student, University of Saint Thomas (Class of 2014)

M.A., Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan (Class of 2013)

TONY PLAUT

Professor of Art

Teaches painting, drawing, collage, and studio art seminar. Works include assemblages made from wood and found materials; mechanical sculptures featuring hand-cranked phonographs; and oil paint on canvas borrowing from the surrealist legacy of biomorphic abstraction. Plaut's work can be viewed at tonyplaut.com. He has exhibited widely throughout the Midwest, with major shows occurring in Chicago and Des Moines. M.F.A., University of Chicago; B.S.S., Cornell College.

SUSAN COLEMAN

Gallery Coordinator and Lecturer in Art

Coordinates Cornell's Luce Gallery and teaches Drawing I and Studio Basics. Her drawings and paintings focus on nature as living source, habitat, and sustenance, both physical and spiritual. Coleman's work can be seen at First Brick Art Gallery in Mount Vernon and Chait Galleries in Iowa City. M.A and M.F.A., University of Iowa; B.F.A., Webster University.

SANDY DYAS

Lecturer in Art

Teaches courses in photography, performance art (Intermedia), and video. Photography courses include film and darkroom work, as well as digital photography. Dyas received first place in the Dubuque Museum of Art's fourth Biennial competition in 2013 and an honorable mention at the New York Center for Photographic Art. Dyas' work can be viewed at sandydyas.com. B.F.A., M.A., M.F.A., Intermedia and Video Art, Photography, University of Iowa.