

One College: Art Department Mission Alignment

With over forty-five years as part of Augsburg's educational program, the Art Department can demonstrate alignment with the college's mission statement in all of the four areas. The themes of Augsburg's identity have been embedded in the way we do our work, and our teaching and learning reflects our commitment to the college's sense of itself.

Liberal Arts

Our courses have fit easily into the liberal arts requirements of the two most recent general education curricula. We provide exposure to the Fine Arts and aesthetics content, and the skills of a liberally educated person—speaking, writing, and thinking critically—are included in both the Studio Art and Art History elements of the discipline. Further, in all studio arts courses we stress a balance of technical skill acquisition, understanding and application of formal principles, and practice of creativity, pushing students to engage their experience, imagination, and ideas with the situations, questions, issues and environment around them. For example, students in watercolor course first learn basic techniques and compositional approaches using the city as a studio to paint on location, then create handmade paper and an in-depth series of their choice connecting surface, content, and their emerging painting style for their final project. The creation of art, and the historical study of art and architecture, require an ability to connect many aspects of human experience—religion, culture, politics, history, science—in order to create and to understand created works. We ask students to engage in a critical dialogue about their work, the work of their peers, the art in their life, and the art historical canon. In doing so they begin to understand themselves while also coming to know the world around them.

Faith and Values of the Christian Church

We teach and learn from an understanding that what one believes matters. Belief and faith are often the basis for the deepest expression of humanity, and these expressions frequently appear in the arts and architecture. From this perspective, we are grateful to be in an environment where matters of faith can be discussed and expressed. Much of the material studied in art history classes (taken by art majors, art and architecture minors, and general education students) is based on an understanding of world religions. When studying the finest examples of art and architecture, we often study religious art and sacred spaces. These examinations help students to value and honor many faith traditions, and typically help them to understand their own traditions better as well.

Context of a Vital Metropolitan Area

We are delighted to be in the center of an arts-rich metropolitan area, and find it essential to our teaching and learning—in our courses and in our co-curricular programs. We invite community artists into our classrooms and we go out to artist studios, museums, and galleries in the cities with our students. We host a full schedule of art exhibits through our gallery programs, and we contribute to the arts scene of the Twin Cities by providing professional quality exhibits in the Gage and Christensen Center galleries. Many of our regular visitors are from off campus. We have engaged in cooperative community projects with neighborhood children exemplified by a recent Forecast Public Art grant in conjunction with the Cedar Riverside/Augsburg College Pottery Cooperative. We require

students to visit local galleries and museums as part of their class work, and we even offer a course that uses the city as its classroom: in the Designed Environment class, Augsburg students study local history, architecture, and urban design entirely on-site. Classes are held on downtown streets and in skyscraper lobbies, at the Mall of America, in parks and cemeteries, in historic churches, and in many other locations that are available to us because of our rich metropolitan environment.

An Intentionally Diverse Campus Community

The art department is committed to an intentionally diverse campus community in a variety of ways. The bodies of work of our faculty, as well as their faces, are diverse. We offer students examples of the best of world art in their study of art history and studio art. This helps students learn about, investigate, and respect a variety of forms of cultural and artistic expression. The studio art courses, in particular, are places where diverse learning styles and skills can be honored. This has included a decades-long tradition in adaptive art making with students who have physical and learning disabilities. Our faculty also has a variety of international teaching and study experiences—especially in Japan, China, France, and in Norway—to bring to bear on the classroom and studio experiences they direct.