

Academy Facts

- Cranbrook Academy of Art is the country's top ranked, graduate-only program in architecture, design and fine art. Each year, just 75 students are invited to study and live on our landmark Saarinen-designed campus, which features private studios, state-of-the art workshops, a renowned Art Museum, and 300 acres of forests, lakes, and streams, all a short drive from the city of Detroit. The focus at Cranbrook is on studio practice in one of 11 disciplines: Architecture, 2D, 3D and 4D Design, Ceramics, Fiber, Metalsmithing, Painting, Photography, Print Media, and Sculpture. The program is anchored by celebrated Artists-and Designers-in-Residence, one for each discipline, all of whom live and practice on campus alongside our students.
- The Academy is still, per capita, the highest producer of student Fulbright scholars in the United States. The Academy also continues to be named one of the Fulbright program's "Top Producing Institutions" by the Institute for International Education.
- We consistently rank as one of the top 10 fine art graduate programs in the country by U.S. News & World Report.
- The Academy was recently named one of the top 15 art schools in the country by Artsy, an international arts magazine.
- At the Academy, we don't have set curriculums, required classes or prerequisites. We don't have undergraduates. Most graduate schools offer a program that grows out of their undergraduate model. We offer something entirely different: a graduate-only program designed specifically to support individual exploration and mentoring at the graduate level.
- At Cranbrook, not only do our 11 Artists-in-Residence determine how their programs are run, the work with each student individually to determine his or her course of study. That study is always centered on a rigorous studio-based practice of making, informed by intensive and regular critique, and the opportunity to observe and work with leading practitioners – the AIRs – in their own studio environments.
- For more than 75 years, Cranbrook has been home to some of the world's most renowned designers and artists. Eero Saarinen, Charles Eames, Daniel Libeskind, Michael and Katherine McCoy, and Jun Kaneko have all taught here, to name only a few. Our students have included Florence Knoll, Harry Bertoia, Jack Lenor Larsen, Nick Cave, Tony Matelli, Niels Diffrient, Lorraine Wild, and Hani Rashid. It's reasonable to say that the work emanating from Cranbrook in the 20th century changed the way people live, and the way they understand art and design.

Departments

Design (Background information only)

Cranbrook has a long history of Design. It was used as an umbrella term to encompass all design departments when the Academy was founded and for many years thereafter. The department was split into 2D Design and 3D Design in 1995.

Design Department Artists-in-Residence

Pipsan Saarinen Swanson 1932-1935

Rachel de Wolfe Raseman 1934 (interior design)

William Comstock 1937-1938

Charles Eames 1939-1941

Walter Baermann 1941-1942

Frank Greer 1942-1943

Department closed part of 1943-1944

Howard Dearstyne 1944-1946

Norman Nagle 1946-1948

Theodore Luderowski 1949-1956

Kenneth Isaacs 1956-1957

Charles McGee 1957-1960

Howard Brown 1960-1967

Katherine and Michael McCoy 1971-1995

Departments

2D Design

The 2D Department is the graduate graphic design department of Cranbrook Academy of Art. The department is actively pursuing work at the intersection of design and art. Traditional forms of design, activities where the designer acts as a conduit for the communication of a third-party message, and non-traditional forms of design, activities where the designer's agency is foregrounded, are explored in the program. In both of these approaches, the emphasis in the department is placed on the experimental. Work being produced falls on a continuum from book, poster and letterform design, through installation, social practices and contemporary art. The results of these investigations often exist at the threshold between design and art. In our conception, the designer is a powerful cultural agent able to seamlessly engage in many forms of cultural production.

2D Design Department Artists-in-Residence

Andrew Blauvelt 1995-1996

Laurie and Scott Makela 1996-2000

Elliot Earls 2001-present

Departments

3D Design

Cranbrook 3D straddles the contexts of industrial design and fine design – industrial design relates to mass production and fine design relates to areas of overlap between design, fine art and craft. Work in the studio covers both of these approaches, so the program is best suited to designers with an interest in both practices. Our program is for designers who wish to develop an architectural and spatial awareness in their work, so there is an emphasis on objects for the interior, including furniture, lighting, and electronic products. The program is best suited to hands-on makers who have already demonstrated some facility in crafting materials. This focus builds on Cranbrook's legacy of teaching design – from Charles Eames in the 1930's to Michael and Katherine McCoy in the 1980's – but also fully updates the discussion to reflect the complexities of today's context. Our group is a deliberate mixture of industrial designers, architects, craftspeople and sculptors so that a diverse set of critical perspectives can inform the discourse. Our conversations draw on theories and strategies from related disciplines including literary theory, psychology, philosophy, and the social sciences – all fields that provide essential tools for expanding the parameters of design thinking. Through a process of questioning, making and discussing, our graduates develop a broad critical framework for evaluating design, and the cultural maturity and creative vision required to lead the emerging design professions.

3D Design Department Artists-in-Residence

Peter Stathis 1995-2000

Scott Klinker 2001-present

Departments

4D Design

The newest program offered at the Academy, the 4D Design department aims to prepare the next generation of design innovators and leaders aspiring to work with emerging technology.

The department explores the myriad ways that the physical world around us has become infused with an undercurrent of flowing data, turning everyday experiences into connected, feedback-driven interactions that are transforming every aspect of culture and society.

4D Design builds on Cranbrook's historic legacy of experimental design activities—just think of the Eames' endless tinkering to produce new forms from experimental materials—while redefining craft to encompass a broad range of outcomes including interactive objects, projected images, embedded electronics, applied robotics, computer-controlled machining, 3D printing and mixed reality environments.

4D Design Department Artists-in-Residence

Carla Diana, 2018-present

Departments

Architecture

For more than 30 years, the Architecture Department at Cranbrook Academy of Art has developed a reputation for questioning the boundaries of architecture as a discipline. Encompassing the profession of architecture and urbanism, as well as the art of shaping the cultural and built environment, the Architecture Department at Cranbrook is a truly multi-disciplinary environment. There is no subject matter, formal exploration, material investigation or means of representation that is outside the realm of critical production at Cranbrook. Architectural making and thinking are invariably applied to domains within and beyond the discipline in order to posit the way architecture affects change in the world. In the department, we seek to respond to the complexities of the ever-changing cultural condition by engaging in critical thinking and discussions that offer openness, inquisition, rigor and a healthy dose of skepticism. We value diversity of thought and welcome diverging voices into the conversation.

Architecture Department, Architects-in-Residence

Eliel Saarinen 1932-1950

Eero Saarinen 1939-1941 (assistant)

Robert Snyder 1951-1965

Glen Paulsen 1966-1970

Jerald Exline 1976-1978

Daniel Libeskind 1978-1985

Dan Hoffman 1986-1996

Peter Lynch 1996-2005

William Massie 2005-2016

Ceren Bingol 2017-present

Departments

Ceramics

The landscape of ceramics is a vast open-ended question, with links to design, the crafts, the art world, industry and engineering. The Ceramics Department at Cranbrook sees these links as a language to explore and as a way into our work. The open structure of the program allows for students to find their own interests within the material world of ceramics and its contextual opposition. Think of the Ceramics Department as a hub. It is a place where we look deeply into the ceramic spectrum, finding strength in its position as a material and as a strategy for conceptual form and idea making. Within this hub we look outward and inward, back through history and forward into the unknown. Out into material possibility and back into its relationship to clay. It's a discussion. In the same way that ceramics is a living document, so is our departmental philosophy. As ceramics records time and place through its material properties, we will also record our time and place through our work in the studios.

Ceramics Department Artists-in-Residence

Ruth Erikson Allen 1931

Waylande Gregory 1932-1933

Marshall Fredericks 1934-1935, 1937-1942

Maija Grotell 1938-1966

Richard DeVore 1966-1978

George Mason 1978-1979

Jun Kaneko 1979-1986

Graham Marks 1986-1992

Tony Hepburn 1992-2008

Anders Ruhwald 2008-2017

Ian McDonald 2017-present

Departments

Fiber

Fiber is an ever-shifting practice that is grounded in the centuries old traditions, forms, and materials of textile production and manipulation. As artists, our intimate relationship with the traditional forms of fiber interacts with the expanse of contemporary practice in art, craft, and design, challenging the definitions of each. Whether the work we produce manifests itself as a sculptural form, garment, functional object, tapestry weaving, socially engaged community practice, digital output, or something else we cannot currently name, we embrace it as a mode of exploration. The foundation of all exploration in the department starts with rigorously questioning what is produced in each person's studio. The process of questioning traditions, definitions, working methods, and basic assumptions about art and society challenges each of us to experiment, examine, and grow. Intrinsic to this process of questioning is an awareness of contemporary issues, historic precedents, and an understanding of professional practices. While attending the Academy you are a member of a community of passionate and rigorous colleagues each questioning your assumptions, place in the world, and the role of your work in that world. Each person must be highly motivated, inquisitive, and open to discussion, challenge, and experimentation. The diversity of experience in the community provides a broad base of information to help you build an idiosyncratic practice that can sustain your development well beyond your time at the Academy.

Fiber Department Artists-in-Residence

Loja Saarinen 1932-1935, 1937-1942

Maja Anderson Wirde 1929-1933

Lilliam Holm 1934-1937

Marianne Strengell 1941-1961

Robert Sailors 1944-1947

Glen Kaufman 1962-1966

Robert Kidd 1967-1969

Gerhardt Knodel 1970-1996

Margo Mensing 1996-1997

Jane Lackey 1997-2007

Mark Newport 2007-present

Departments

Metalsmithing

The starting point for the work within the department is a healthy mistrust of the idea that the creation of certain kinds of artistic objects requires the use of specific materials; and that the choice of materials is prescribed, or determined by tradition and artistic conventions. The program is focused on questioning the meaning and value of such techniques and materials through the process and practice of making, i.e., an exploration of their significance and possibilities within the context of both current artistic trends and movements. Offering a wide range of available material and technical options, the studio of each student ideally functions as a research space, a laboratory, in which knowledge and curiosity jointly fuel the search for new possibilities of making, and for ways of expanding the boundaries of the field. Broadly international in outlook and orientation, the department is focused on innovation through tradition, urging students to move beyond their limitations. Through critiques and exchange within the department students are able to refine and extend their conceptual and technical talents and abilities. The department offers a research environment in which to move beyond traditional skills and techniques. Students are encouraged to explore ways in which they can act as innovators in the fields of art and craft. Through individual challenge, exploration and development, the program offers each student the opportunity to develop a highly-distinctive approach to craft, a personal language, and a thorough awareness of current practices in the world of art and craft, as well an extensive professional network, and knowledge of the wider context in which to function as an independent artist.

Metalsmithing Department Artists-in-Residence

John C. Burnett 1929-1930 (ironworker)

Arthur Nevill Kirk 1929-1933 (silversmith)

Charles Price 1936

Harry Bertoia 1938-1943

Hermann Garfield [Hermann Gurfinkel]1945-1947

Richard Thomas 1948-1984

Gary Griffin 1984-2006

Iris Eichenberg 2006-present

Departments

Painting

While existing in a continuum with centuries of painting, craft, styles, and issues, contemporary painting may encompass media that go far beyond the brush. The painting program at Cranbrook stresses self-exploration and independent work in an atmosphere of ongoing critical discussion involving social, political, and artistic concerns. It is grounded in the assumption that each student arrives exceptionally motivated and committed to creating art. The students themselves give form and vitality to the working environment through their energy, diversity, and interaction. Frequent individual and group critiques allow students to engage in dialogue with peers and various members of the Academy faculty. These encounters challenge students to question their intentions, encourage students to experiment, and to press their work further. The studio building was designed by Eliel Saarinen specifically to accommodate painters. The studios have high ceilings, solid walls, good light, and privacy. Visiting artists, critics, and theorists offer lectures, critiques, and seminars that add breadth to the curriculum.

Painting Department Artists-in-Residence

Frank L. Allen 1930-1932

Zoltan Sepeshy 1931-1966 (Emeritus 1967-1974)

John Cunningham 1932

Wallace Mitchell 1936-1942,1945-1950

Clifford B. West 1943

Donald Willett 1964-69

George Ortman 1970-1992

Beverly Fishman 1992-present

Departments

Photography

The Photography Department is a space of critical discussion and thinking through making. Photography posed the question when it was invented, where is the real in this image? It imitated reality, but forever disrupted it. For this reason any art made with or in relationship to the lens has to take into account the social and political space it helps produce. In this department we expand our understanding of photography to encompass technologies of image-making as media: still, moving, animated, digital, analog, and everything in between. We expand what photography is to images in the form of the moving image, digitally generated images, lens-based technologies, and media technologies in general. Critical discussions in seminars, group critique and studio visits will help us to make work that engages our contemporary condition in relation to the ever-expanding remit of images. The department encourages consideration of how form and content work together to create meaning; as Marshall Muchlan famously said, the medium is the message.

Photography Department Artists-in-Residence

Richard C. Jackson 1971

Carl Toth 1972-2007

David Hilliard (interim) 2007-2008

Liz Cohen 2008-2017

Danielle Dean 2017-present

Departments

Print Media

The Print Media department is characterized by an expanded concept of printmaking through interdisciplinary practice. This expansive approach to print as process allows for innovation with traditional and new print media. A print can exist as a drawing, graphic, photograph, sculpture, video, sound file, digital file or performance. The department supports a broad investigation of print media. It builds a framework for critique beginning with the historic role of print as a Democratic Voice and continues with media ecology and the circulation of images in the 21st Century. Challenge begins in the studio. Each student that enters the department should have a high level of self-motivation to create work, a restless curiosity about self and world, the maturity to handle the interface of life and creative practice and be willing to work with others for mutual artistic growth within a constructive but demanding learning environment.

Printmaking/Print Media Department Artists-in-Residence

Laurence Barker 1960-1970

Bob Evermon 1969-1973

Irwin Hollander 1973-1975

Connor Everts 1976-1981

Steve Murakishi 1981-2002

Randy Bolton 2002-2016

Susan Goethel Campbell 2016-2018

Emmy Bright + Cooper Holowski 2018-present

Departments

Sculpture

The Academy functions as a creative bell jar, an environment to explore, define, and develop potential. The process of questioning is the personal conduit to the comprehension of our social, political, and moral environment. Sculpture is produced through the continual evolution between idea and form that embodies this spirit of inquiry. The Sculpture Department can be defined as an attempt to instigate changing perceptual experiences through three dimensions. The intent is to learn about one's own work through criticism, dialogue, and interaction with individuals pursuing related goals with equal intensity. Artists work within a context delineated by the cultural, ideological, and political systems of their time. A critical grasp of historical issues and iconography is essential to extend and provoke the parameters of contemporary art. The departmental emphasis is upon studio production with a full-time commitment to the expansion of ideas. The curriculum centers around individual and group critiques with the head of the department, visiting artists, curators, and critics. All students are given reading and writing assignments, to research and explore contemporary art issues. These readings and writings mirror issues raised by visiting artists, the Artists-in-Residence, and student concerns.

Sculpture Department Artists-in-Residence

Geza Maroti 1927-1929

David Evans 1929-1930

Carl Milles 1931-1953

Marshall Fredericks 1934-1942

Janet de Coux 1942-1944

Jon Jonson 1944-1947

William McVey 1947-1953

John Risley 1951-1952

Glenn Chamberlain 1954-1956

Morris Brose 1956-1957

Berthold Schiwetz 1957-1963

Julius Schmidt 1964-1968

Jeremy Samson 1970-1972

Kenneth Fadeley 1973-1976

Michael Hall 1970-1990

Dana Duff 1990-1991

Heather McGill 1991-2017

Rebecca Ripple 2017-present