

## **Studio Arts at Hamilton**

### *Mission*

Art plays an integral role in the way societies define themselves and are defined. This is as true for our contemporary society as for the societies from which we have developed. The Department of Art provides many important ways for students to experience the multi-varied aspects of the arts, including rigorous technical instruction, careful critical analysis, exploration of theoretical and historical concepts and thoughtful exploration of personal creative ideas. The Department seeks to have students realize the significance of the visual arts in their lives and the particular ways in which it can express and communicate ideas.

### *Curriculum*

The range of the contemporary artist extends over a great variety of media and techniques, and the curriculum for the creation of art at Hamilton is changing to prepare students for this. In the studios and workshops at Hamilton students develop their fluency with the techniques of drawing, painting, printmaking, darkroom photography, digital photography, sculpture, ceramics, and video. Within the next year the Department will develop a Foundations course, in which students will be introduced to the fundamental concepts and techniques of these media. From there students will continue to develop strengths in several media.

Instruction in art at Hamilton is highly personalized. Students work very closely with their professors, who serve both as their most astute critics and as their strongest advocates. The senior program in art, in which students dedicate themselves to the creation of a significant body of work, has long been an exemplar for the design of senior programs in other departments at the College.

### *Interdisciplinary Connections*

The department has actively collaborated with other departments at the College for several years. For example, a team-taught course on the chemistry of art received national attention. A sophomore seminar course entitled “Art and Physics of the Image” will be offered next semester. And for nearly a decade now, the department has collaborated with the Department of Music in offering the team-taught “Electronic Arts Workshop.”

### *Enrollment*

Even after the end of distribution requirements with the class of 2004, courses in studio art continue to fill, and many courses continue to have wait lists. Total enrollment averages 200 students per semester, and the department has graduated 16-22 concentrators each year.

### *The State of the Studios*

The List building is a labyrinth of split levels, awkwardly sized rooms, and corridors that double as teaching spaces. Achieving suitable ventilation and lighting has been a chronic issue for the department since the building opened. Many of these issues result from the fact that the building was designed before the Kirkland College faculty was in place. But other issues result from the fact that the building has been in continuous use by a thriving program that has changed considerably in the years since it was built. The construction of an addition in the early 1990's certainly alleviated a few problems, but the most difficult issues remain.

Much of the teaching of the department must continue to take place elsewhere on campus. There is a suite of studios in the basement of Dunham dorm, and video classes must meet in the basement of Burke Library.

### *A New Kind of Studio Art Space*

The core areas of the spaces we propose will be common areas:

- A large classroom for the Foundations course and for drawing
- An exhibition space that can be used for critique sessions and where students will share their work with the campus and community audience

Surrounding this core will be a range of workshops, studios, and support spaces: a large classroom for painting, a printmaking workshop/classroom, a sculpture classroom, a wood shop, a "hot" workshop for metals and ceramics, a plaster/plastic workshop, a darkroom, dedicated spaces for senior projects, and the interdisciplinary Studio for Trans-media Arts and Related Studies (where video artists can work with musicians, dancers, actors, poets, mathematicians, scientists, and others).

### *The Future*

The construction of the proposed facilities will provide teaching spaces that support rather than thwart the best practices of contemporary studio art education. The program in studio art at Hamilton will be much better prepared to offer the guidance to concentrators and non-concentrators alike that will prepare them to understand and engage the challenges and opportunities for artists in the twenty-first century.