The Arts at Middlebury

PROMOTING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION, AND SELF-EXPRESSION

Learning to practice and appreciate the arts opens students’ eyes and minds to different ways of seeing the world and sharing their observations and ideas. The lessons learned through studying the arts are invaluable in any professional pursuit.

The visual and performing arts are fundamentally important to the life and culture of Middlebury College. Our students engage with the arts as both creators and viewers. They are painters and sculptors, actors, musicians, and songwriters. They attend gallery openings, dance recitals, plays, and rock concerts. The arts are all over campus and are central to every student’s education.

The College offers courses for majors and non-majors in seven arts programs: architectural studies, art history, dance, film and media culture, music, studio art, and theatre. An engaged and accomplished faculty, complemented by a broad spectrum of visiting artists and lecturers, creates an exciting and challenging environment where students can discover their potential as artists and develop the skills of self-discipline, responsibility, and creative problem solving.

EXPERIENCING THE ARTS

The arts are part of daily life on campus. Students are constantly making art—paintings, sculptures, poetry, and other forms—and displaying it in formal and informal exhibitions. They make films and videos, often recruiting other students as actors. They form dance groups, do improvisational comedy, write and produce plays, compose and perform music of all kinds. Some two-dozen theatre productions are staged each year, designed and directed by students, faculty members, alumni, or visiting artists.

The Mahaney Center for the Arts is the hub for artistic experiences. Its concert hall, dance and studio theatres, and art museum showcase student and faculty performances, exhibitions, and events.

“The ability to think creatively, to recognize links where none were obvious at first sight, is appreciated more and more nowadays. Our students try out that kind of thinking in the arts, and then they can apply it in any endeavor they pursue.”

—PIETER BROUCKE | Director of the Arts and Professor of History of Art & Architecture
MUSEUM OF ART
Middlebury’s nationally accredited Museum of Art, also located at the Mahaney Center, has a permanent collection of several thousand objects ranging from classical and Asian antiquities to contemporary art and photography. Galleries are dedicated to specific periods and cultures, and also to temporary exhibitions, such as paintings from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, environmental photography, and contemporary African art. These special exhibitions are on display throughout the year, and the museum regularly hosts lectures, gallery talks, films, school programs, and workshops.

Other Facilities for the Arts

- Wright Memorial Theatre, a versatile 50-seat space with a proscenium stage.
- Hebrew Zoo, an informal performing space where students mount their own productions.
- The Christian A. Johnson Memorial Building, which houses the studio-art and architectural-studies programs and a student art gallery.
- The Donald E. Axinn Center, home to the program in film and media studies.
- The Performing Arts Series brings internationally acclaimed artists in music, dance, and theatre to campus to perform, inspire, and conduct residencies. This not only enhances Middlebury’s curriculum, but also enables the local community to enjoy levels of artistry usually available only in major cities.

The Dance Company of Middlebury has toured recently to Cuba, New York, Los Angeles, and Europe. Theatre productions are regularly chosen for the Kennedy Center’s American College Theatre Festival. Pentecost, which was performed in 2014 in the New England Region competition, is the ninth College production to earn honors. Also in 2014, the college choir toured Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic.

The Performing Arts Series brings celebrated artists in music, dance, and theatre to campus to perform, inspire, and conduct residencies. This not only enhances Middlebury’s curriculum, but also enables the local community to enjoy levels of artistry usually available only in major cities.

Buses take students of opera and theatre to performances in New York City and students of art history to museums in Boston. Seniors in art history explore the New York art world through meetings with dealers, curators, and gallery owners. Seniors in architectural studies visit Montreal, Boston, and New York to meet professionals in the field.

Internships in the Arts

Internships give students opportunities to make connections in the professional art world and fine-tune their career aspirations. They might begin to create networks that could lead to jobs, or they might discover that they want to go in a different direction in their careers. Students find internships locally and in major cities and art centers around the globe, benefitting from a faculty and alumni network of world-class artists. Whether they are helping to mount an art exhibit in China, participating in an archaeological dig in Mesoamerica, or working with film industry leaders in Los Angeles, Middlebury students experience the full spectrum of the art firsthand.

Some recent internships include:

- Nicholas Hemerling ‘14 interned with the Orchard Project in Hunter, New York, which brings cutting-edge theatre artists together to develop new plays.
- James Wing ‘15 worked in Chicago as a production assistant on the upcoming film Jupiter Ascending by Andy and Lana Wachowskis, creators of The Matrix trilogy.
- Maxxin Eingorn ‘14 spent a summer in the exhibitions department at the Ullens Center for Contemporary art in Beijing. “On a daily basis, I might be responsible for any number of tasks, the most common involving maintenance and transportation of multimillion-dollar artworks. . . . I learned that with great responsibility come extremely long days and frequent overtime,” he says.

Careers in the Arts

Many Middlebury students go on to significant achievements as artists or in related fields. Some examples:

- Ian Berger ‘96, producer, Comedy Central’s The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.
- Robert Gober ‘76, internationally renowned curator, artist, and sculptor, whose work will be the subject of a retrospective exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 2015.
- Lauren Kiel ‘97, actress and assistant to the president of Lincoln Center.
- Paul Matteson ‘06, choreographer and Bessie Award-winning dancer.
- Christian Parker ‘93, associate artistic director, Atlantic Theatre Company, and associate professor, Columbia University School of the Arts.

Learn more at http://ptpnewyork.org

The World is a Stage

PTP/NYC is an off-Broadway theatre company operating in association with Middlebury College. This is the only collaboration in the country between a professional theatre company and an undergraduate liberal arts college, giving theatre students opportunities to hone their skills in a rigorous, professional environment.

The company was founded in 1987 by Middlebury professors Richard Romagnoli and Cheryl Farone, along with Boston University’s Jim Petaos. Each year it offers a month of repertory performances at Atlantic Stage 2 in New York City, staging two or three plays as well as readings and other events. The 2014 season’s line-up included the U.S. premiere of Howard Barker’s Gertrude: The Cry, directed by Romagnoli, and a revival of David Edgar’s Pentecost, directed by Farone.

The PTP/NYC company included 12 Middlebury students and 13 graduates in 2014. It was the first foray into New York’s professional theatre world for most of the students, providing opportunities for hands-on experience in acting, technical theatre, and arts administration. “PTP is incredible for the student members of the company because we have the opportunity to work and act alongside professional actors,” said Mari Val-Golden ‘14. “We also served as the crew for both shows, which let us see behind the scenes and gain the technical skills necessary for putting on a full production.”

Prior to taking residence at Atlantic Stage 2 each year, the company spends three weeks in preparation at Middlebury. That pays off when the college arrives in New York, according to Farone. “The actors and crew all get to know each other very well, which is invaluable for creating the onstage chemistry that makes for exciting acting,” she explains.

Learn more at http://ptpnewyork.org