

Studio Art Assessment Report, 2011-2013

Attachment to 2011-2013 Bi-Annual Report

The Department of Art uses a variety of means to assess its curriculum. The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) requires routine, annual updates on assessment in addition to the more comprehensive on-site accreditation reviews and self-studies performed periodically (ours is next scheduled to occur 2014-15). The department also uses our Senior Thesis Exhibition and Senior Reflective Essays as key assessment tools. Each year, all studio art faculty convene on the morning before the opening of the Senior Thesis Exhibition at the Tang Museum, to evaluate and grade the work of our seniors. In the afternoon we gather to discuss and debate our individual assessments of their work, and thereby engage in assessing ourselves and the larger studio program. These are not always easy conversations, but they are always illuminating and help us to better design and deliver the content of our individual courses. Faculty are also routinely engaged in assessing their individual programs and courses through reviewing student portfolios and comprehensive critiques. In many ways our most useful assessment tool may be the informal conversations that faculty have about what is working, and not working, in various corners of our curriculum. As these conversations build, they often result in more formal undertakings, as occurred in September 2011 when our Curriculum Committee began oversight of a comprehensive curriculum review. This review triggered a year-long effort to reinvent our entire major, based in large measure upon our assessment of student engagement and learning outcomes. I am happy to report that the college's Curriculum Committee approved the new studio art major in April 2013, to take effect with the incoming class (Fall 2013).

If I may offer a few personal thoughts, the difficulty I find with assessment is that it so often draws into question our conflicted values and aspirations. What, indeed, is the most important goal for our students? Are our goals their goals? Are the outcomes we can most easily measure telling us what we really need to know? While individual questions such as these are often perplexing, they stimulate us to think about how we might do things differently, and that in turn helps us to see where our priorities lie. In our case, this led us to imagine a new curriculum which capitalized upon one of our greatest strengths (diverse studio disciplines) while jettisoning old notions of prescriptive foundations course sequences. In addition, our new curriculum seeks to deepen the engagement of its majors by requiring a formal "declaration of concentration". This will, I am confident, encourage students to examine more thoughtfully their personal goals, and to commit more openly to a partnership with faculty who desire to help them achieve these goals.

Studio Art Assessment Program: Learning Goals

1. Mission Statement

Skidmore's strong tradition in the liberal arts grounds our majors' education in extensive work in our interdisciplinary Liberal Studies program, as well as in the

Arts, Humanities, and Sciences, where courses emphasize critical thinking, significant reading and writing skills, and quantitative reasoning abilities. Within this broader context, the Department of Art seeks to introduce and develop in all of its students those intellectual, creative, perceptual and technical abilities which are appropriate to the making of art, and the ability to evaluate, judge and appreciate which is appropriate to the understanding of works of art.

2. Goals for the Studio Art Major

The Studio Art program offers a rich and diverse range of investigations across the disciplines of art making and art history. Integrating extensive liberal arts offerings with a broad studio experience, majors choose to balance exploration with focus in a particular area as preparation for graduate school or future work in an art-related field. Critical thinking, imaginative problem solving, and self-reflective evaluation are key components in the development of the theoretical and technical aspects of art making. Through art courses students gain competency in visual language, an increasingly important skill in contemporary culture. Visual and verbal analytical and organizational skills learned in the studio apply to thoughtful practice in many arenas of our complex world.

I. Knowledge

The student who successfully completes the studio art major at Skidmore College will understand and experience the practice of art and will understand the role of art as a force in human knowledge. The student will know:

1. The visual language of art and design;
2. Fundamental studio practice; techniques, procedures, and theory shared across studio disciplines;
3. Major achievements in the history of art, Western and non-Western;
4. Varied approaches to the role of art in human experience.

II. Skills and Reasoning Processes

The student who successfully completes the studio art major at Skidmore College will understand the integration of technical proficiency and critical thinking. The student will be able to competently:

1. Manipulate art, craft, and design media, utilizing traditional and contemporary technologies;
2. Organize, analyze, and interpret visual phenomena using problem solving skills;
3. Communicate clearly about art in oral and written form;
4. Evaluate one's own artmaking and that of one's peers through critical reasoning about the use of materials, formal elements and content;
5. Create a body of work, which joins ideas and process-oriented learning.

III Application

The studio art major who graduates from Skidmore College will have acquired knowledge, skills, and reasoning abilities which will enable him/her to apply this experience in a variety of ways. The student will be able to:

1. Synthesize knowledge from many fields into studio practice;
2. Engage in substantive self-directed artistic activity;
3. Direct these learned abilities to thoughtful practice in any arena;
4. Contribute to the cultural, intellectual, and educational life of the community.