

ATELIÉR: Building the Visual Arts Studios of the 21st Century

school year 2012-13, according to surveys by the Higher Education Arts Data Services, 104 separate U.S. colleges and universities reported major new construction or renovation projects for art/design facilities. Defying the “common sense” formula of steering ever more young people toward business schools, the surge in demand for art studio buildings accelerates, driven by a combination of growing student populations, aging found space arts facilities, and the steadily increasing popularity of undergraduate and MFA art programs. The result has been an explosion of new studio construction.

Looking at the Studio Versus Looking at the Art

Based on the sheer cost of these projects, you might assume there are well-defined design guidelines for this building type, that is, a set of standards that architects, artists and administrators can refer to when making design decisions—the way design standards have been developed for classroom buildings, for example.

That assumption would be wrong. Even though hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent building visual arts studios in our country over the next decade, to date there has been little published information available to help the designers of those facilities understand the nature of their assignment in depth. The following chapters address specific arts media and their studios, outlining the key design criteria for lighting, ventilation, safety, physical layouts and dimensions.

For all media, however, we can identify two particular design concerns that will affect studio design with growing urgency:

- **Much stricter standards for energy efficiency** will require new lighting strategies in order to maintain the high illumination levels often needed by artists.
- **High indoor environmental quality**

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photo: Luca Vignelli

New York Academy of Art. Renovation of 1868 commercial loft building for the nonprofit cultural institution housing the nation’s first graduate school of figurative art, a continuing education program and an extensive figurative art library.

New York Academy of Art. The proposed 8,800 sq ft rooftop addition represents the last Phase of the Master Plan. North light diffusing skylights will illuminate a 7,000 sq ft column free space. Mechanical systems are mounted on the rear façade to maximize usable space.

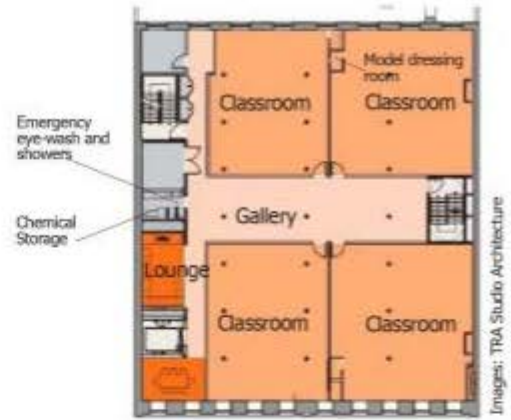


Image: TRA Studio Architecture

Chapter 1: The Architecture of Art Studios

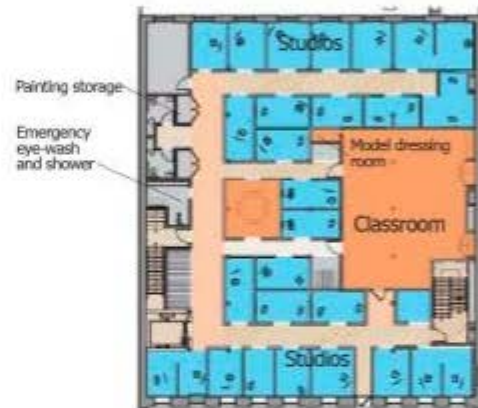


photo: Luca Vignelli



Images: TPA Studio Architecture

Fifth Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



photo: Luca Vignelli



Franklin Street

First Floor Plan

New York Academy of Art, First, Second and Fifth Floors, showing exhibition and reception spaces at street level, with working studios and classrooms on upper floors away from public circulation.

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photo: Luca Vignelli

New York Academy of Art. Street-level Cast Hall also serves as an exhibition space that helps the school connect with the public—including potential students, patrons and collaborators.

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will be mandatory: fumes from acid baths and toxic solvents, harmful dust from silica clays, high noise levels from power tools and many other traditional art-process hazards will need to be addressed much more effectively than in the past.

New Standards for Art Studios

The artists and students who work in these studios will be the inventors of the visual culture of the 21st century. To create studios that will work for them now and for many years will need the best ideas we can find from the most successful projects around the world.

These new studios and buildings will:

- Provide high performance at relatively low cost.
- Help artists and art departments bring in critics, visiting artists and a wide range of outside collaborators.
- Help generate current and future revenue.
- Help artists and arts programs build future patrons and donors as effectively as athletic and science programs do.

- Help artists build links to the wider community, whether through public exhibitions, adult education, programs for at-risk youth, or other mutually beneficial outreach efforts.
- Provide a safe, healthy creative environment, developed with green technology that can be operated economically and sustainably over many years.
- Encourage artists to experiment with many kinds of art production, including traditional media such as painting, printmaking and sculpture, as well as film, video, performance, installations, digital animation, immersive game environments, and more.

But to understand the future, first we should consider the past. Before we start our tour of the studios of the 21st century, let's explore how visual artists have worked in previous times, and investigate some of the different kinds of work spaces these resourceful men and women have invented for themselves.