College of Fine Arts
Head, School of Art
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA

THE SEARCH

The College of Fine Arts and the School of Art at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) seek a collaborative and strategic leader to serve as the next Head of School (Head). An innovative art school within an R1 university, the [School of Art](#) combines a renowned studio program with the interdisciplinary resources of a cutting-edge research university and bridges traditional studio practice with the experimental practices of new and unconventional media. Driven by conceptual thinking and expanded notions of artistic practice, the School of Art is among the world's most distinctive art programs.

One of five schools within the College of Fine Arts (CFA) at Carnegie Mellon, the School of Art offers two fine arts degrees, the Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts, and supports four interdisciplinary degrees known collectively as the BXA Intercollege Degree Programs. With a student body hailing from throughout the United States and around the world – including Asia, Europe, and the Americas– the School of Art is a diverse, tight-knit community of approximately 250 students. With a 9:1 student-teacher ratio, students are able to work closely with professors and one another to push the possibilities of what art is and can be.

The next Head will join a school in a strong position. Having invested significantly over the last years in a reimagined curriculum, revamped programs, and new spaces, with a strong and engaged faculty and staff, a solid foundation is in place. The next Head will have the opportunity to look to a changing future and ensure that the School of Art remains a cutting-edge, responsive institution. They will be a passionate believer in art and the power of art education and will be a gifted communicator,

entrepreneurial in nature, comfortable working in generative partnership with faculty, staff, and students, and a tireless champion for the school of art.

The College of Fine Arts has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist in this recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications can be directed to the firm as indicated at the end of this document.

SCHOOL OF ART

A premier location for the interface between art, technology, and interdisciplinary art practice, the School of Art's curriculum combines the advantages of a renowned studio program with the resources of a top-tier university. The School of Art is a multifaceted community of artists, makers, and thinkers comfortable engaging in work that defines and redefines the notions of art-making and artistic impact. Home to undergraduate, graduate, interdisciplinary, and non-degree students, along with an exceptional faculty and staff representing a multitude of disciplinary expertise, the School of Art is a place where perspectives intermingle and where the conceptual and hands-on complement one another.

This current chapter for the School of Art has been one of building. The MFA program was recently bolstered with new facilities and a re-envisioned curricular core; the undergraduate curriculum was restructured, making room for a common first-year foundations experience; increased options in coursework for non-major students have enhanced the college's financial strength; application and enrollment numbers have increased; and the partnership with ICA Pittsburgh has been strengthened, especially with the University breaking ground on a prominent new space at the gateway to campus.

Program

Undergraduate students can choose from two programs. The undergraduate BFA, a new curriculum born of work over the last four years, integrates conceptual rigor and theoretical discourse, along with hands-on studio practice in order to answer the "how" and "why" behind art-making. The program is grounded in the first-year Foundations curriculum spanning 2D, 3D, and 4D art-making forms – from Drawing and Sculpture, to experimental Time-Based and Digital Media, including Animation, Games, XR, and Creative Coding. Beginning in the second year, students can elect a concentration, or build their own hybrid path, from Drawing, Painting, Print Media, & Photography; Sculpture, Installation, & Site-Work; Electronic & Time-Based Media; and Social Practice. In the senior year, students will complete an ambitious capstone project.

The BXA Intercollege Degree Programs offer a formal means for integrating study in the humanities, sciences, computer science, or engineering with artistic practice. Students graduate with a BHA, BSA, BESA, or BCSA degree. Art students who follow this path (BXA degrees are open to students from any of the five schools within the College of Fine Arts) combine a foundation in studio art with a study in

another academic college to envision new ways to create and expand our understanding of contemporary art.

The School of Art MFA program is an interdisciplinary, experimental, research-based program that provides students with a challenging and supportive context to expand and develop their work and thinking as artists. Graduate students are encouraged to employ a comparative and intersectional approach to critical and cultural theories, and to allow this inquiry to inform and expand what it means to be an artist and to make art within our contemporary condition. The Program's three-year structure is designed to provide the time, resources, and support for in-depth multidisciplinary research, the development of new technical and conceptual skills, and the possibility of radical shifts in materials, themes, and processes. Combined, the three-year structure, small cohort (normally six students are admitted per year), and committed core faculty aim to provide a platform that supports the formation of progressive ideas, theories, and studio practices. The School of Art provides full tuition funding for all MFA students.

In addition to its degree programs, the School of Art is an active partner in several interdisciplinary programs and spaces that take further advantage of the full breadth of Carnegie Mellon. The School plays a significant role in the IDeATe: Integrative Design, Art, & Technology program, which offers undergraduate minor concentrations, with courses able to be attached to any major on campus, including Game Design, Animation & Special Effects, Media Design, Sonic arts, Design for Learning, Innovation, & Entrepreneurship, Intelligent Environments, Physical Computing, Soft Technologies, and Immersive Technologies in Arts & Culture. The Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry is an incubator space for students and faculty from across CMU to explore the intersection of the arts, science, technology, and culture.

The Institute for Contemporary Art Pittsburgh (ICA Pittsburgh – formerly the Miller Institute for Contemporary Art) is a world-class museum and exhibition space on campus. Dedicated to the mission of creating and disseminating knowledge and art, the ICA expands the notion of art and culture by providing a forum for conversations around creativity and innovation, and produces international touring exhibitions, projects, events, and publications with a focus on social issues. The ICA will be housed in the new Richard King Mellon Hall of Sciences when it is completed in 2027.

People

The School of Art is home to 240 undergraduate and 18 MFA students. Admission is competitive, with more than 900 undergraduate and 280 MFA applications per year. Roughly 25% of students are international, coming to CMU from across Asia, Europe, and the Americas. A 9:1 student-to-faculty ratio provides for an environment where students and faculty are able to work closely together. Home to dedicated artists and interdisciplinary students looking to augment other studies, the School of Art is home to a variety of perspectives and styles of engagement.

The faculty is composed of 24 tenured and tenure-track full-time faculty and approximately 12 adjunct faculty with expertise, personal practice, and research areas spanning a range of contemporary art, media, and theoretical perspectives. A strong and dedicated 14-person professional staff plays a crucial role in the teaching, learning, and making in the School.

Place

With more than 50,000 sq. feet of facilities, students and faculty have access to both traditional art-making and new media art-making facilities. Spaces for 2D work include drawing and painting studios, print, media facilities, including space for screen print, lithography, Risograph printing, and more, along with silver-based darkroom photography facilities. Spaces for 3D work include fully stocked wood and metal shops, a ceramics studio, a physical computing lab, and digital fabrication facilities including 3D printers, laser cutters, a CNC router, and more. Media resources include a lending collection of state-of-the-art equipment, including cameras, lighting, projectors, audio recording equipment, and more. In addition to these resources, juniors and seniors have their own dedicated studio space.

MFA students have access to a purpose-built facility housed in Hall of the Arts. The facility includes 18 studios, each approximately 300 sq. feet with large windows providing natural light. Common study and community areas, including a kitchen and flex space, support coursework, critiques, seminars, and programming.

COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Founded in 1905 by Andrew Carnegie five years after he established the Carnegie Technical Schools with a gift of $1 million, the College of Fine Arts was one of the first comprehensive entities for arts education in the United States. The College is home to five schools: Art, Architecture, Design, Drama, and Music. Each school operates with significant autonomy, with independent admission processes, governance structures, and cultures.

Research and creativity in the College of Fine Arts are broad and deep endeavors, and the schools and units within the College share a commitment to creative expression, problem-solving, collaboration, and inquiry-based research. The CFA is a destination at Carnegie Mellon for students with multidisciplinary interests across the arts, humanities, science, and technology.

Dean Mary Ellen Poole joined Carnegie Mellon University and the College of Fine Arts on August 1, 2021. Dr. Poole is a musicologist who most recently served as the director of (and professor of musicology in) the Sarah and Ernest Butler School of Music at The University of Texas at Austin, a post she held beginning in June 2014.

THE ROLE

As the chief academic and operational officer of the School of Art, the Head provides both strategic direction and administrative leadership for the School. The Head must be passionate about the mission of the School of Art, committed to excellence and innovation, and forward-thinking about the future potential of the School. At the same time, the Head must bring impeccable professionalism, diplomacy, and administrative skills to the operations of a large and diverse school, including deft management of personnel, financial resources, facilities, operations, and planning. They will also be a partner to colleagues across the College. The Head is also responsible for significant fundraising work in cooperation with the Dean of the College and the advancement team.

The Head of School has six direct reports: the MFA Program Assistant Director, the Assistant Head of Academic Affairs, the Associate Head of Administration, the Undergraduate Admission Director, the Curriculum Coordinator and Pre-College Director, and the Business Manager. The School of Art has a $5 million annual budget. Carnegie Mellon operates in a Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) budget model.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

The Head of School will bring infectious energy, optimism, dedication, and passion for the work ahead, and will be able to collaborate, guide, and build towards a sustainable future. The next Head will:

Develop a sustainable long-term vision for the School of Art

The School of Art has been anything but static over its last chapter. It has been a time of building new programs, curriculum, spaces, and partnerships. Today, the School is firmly situated in a position to thrive. With these new resources in place, the time is right to develop a vision for the future that can withstand current and future challenges. The Head will guide the work of the School to ensure a clearly articulated vision and a collectively understood identity that can guide future work and decision making. The Head will build consensus around initiatives within the School and ensure strategic alignment within the College and University. The Head will lead an organization committed to its mission and agile in its nature to ensure that the School of Art remains on the cutting edge of contemporary arts education.

Lead an engaged community

The School of Art seeks a Head whose leadership style embraces and complements the organization's culture of engagement, transparent communication, and shared ownership. The Head will bring a demonstrated willingness to consult and incorporate feedback. They will recognize and enlist the

expertise of faculty and staff and lead collaboratively. The Head is close with students, serving often in an advisory capacity, as a sounding board, and outlet. The culture of "my door is always open" is truly lived. The Head will show up, speak authentically, engage with empathy, identify shared values and common ground, respect differences, and promote a culture of open and constructive dialogue that serves the School's mission. In all endeavors, the Head will evince active listening, work collaboratively in the shared governance model, and maintain forward momentum.

Support scholarly and creative practice

The Head will work with faculty to support and promote outstanding research and high standards of scholarly and creative practice. They will champion faculty in seeking internal and external funding to support both disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and teaching. While ensuring the overall operational efficiency of the school, the Head will also be cognizant of the specific needs of each discipline and work to equip each for success. The Head must have the requisite experience to engage in the evaluation process inherent in tenure and promotion, to supervise faculty and staff, and oversee performance reviews.

Facilitate a best-in-class organization

The relatively autonomous school structure within the College of Fine Arts gives the Head significant operational responsibility. The Head must ensure that the structural and operational aspects of the School of Art are of a quality that allows the School to continue offering a best-in-class educational program. Areas of focus in this regard might include (though are not limited to): systematizing recent changes in curriculum so that they run smoothly, ensuring that physical spaces and facilities are up to standard, and investing in the professional development of faculty and staff. The Head will ensure that the School of Art is where new and best practices prevail. This will require a strategic orientation, the skills to work with all levels of institutional leadership, the ability to capture and utilize data, systemic thinking, and the cultivation of an institutional planning mindset throughout the organization.

Steward a strong financial base

The School of Art is in a healthy financial position and can operate from a position of strength. Yet the operations of a modern studio-based art school will also carry significant expenses. The Head must be a prudent financial steward and a strategic, astute operator.

The School of Art has had considerable success in securing philanthropic support. Yet there is potential that remains untapped, and the need for diversified financial support will remain in the future. The Head will seize the opportunity to attract and increase gifts and grants. The Head must

be a gifted relationship builder, a magnetic ambassador, and compelling storyteller who will present the School of Art as an attractive resource and priority investment.

Be a good neighbor

Carnegie Mellon is an inherently interdisciplinary institution. The School of Art, with high populations of BXA students, double majors, and minors, is no exception. The Head must lead a school able to collaborate, both within the College of Fine Arts and across the University to use resources efficiently and build clear pathways for students, faculty, and programs to take advantage of the tremendous intellectual diversity present at Carnegie Mellon. Fully realized, there is no school of art that can boast such artistic depth paired with interdisciplinary breadth.

Engage locally

The Head of the School of Art is a leader in a vibrant Pittsburgh art community. They must nurture and establish connections throughout the Pittsburgh arts landscape and champion the city's reputation throughout the broader art world.

Embrace community

The Head will prioritize and champion institutional and individual commitments to make the School of Art a diverse, equitable, and just organization. Initiatives will be advanced with intent and should include measurable outcomes to ensure accountability and sustained progress. Belonging will be further strengthened through access and affordability, financial support, increased student support and wellness services, competitive compensation, and attention to physical accessibility.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications, skills, and experiences to the role.

- A deep and enthusiastic understanding of, and commitment to, the School of Art's mission and disciplines, and strong leadership in asserting the essential nature of artistic practice in today's world.
- A community member, willing and able to lead and engage at both the ground and executive level; a deep and driving commitment to students, their success, and well-being.
- Experience working collaboratively with faculty and staff, helping both to achieve productive, meaningful outcomes in their work.
- Excellent communication skills with the ability to energize and inspire faculty, students, staff, parents, alumni, and external stakeholders and provide confidence in the future; a

collaborative, inclusive, transparent, and good-humored leadership style with a willingness to consult and listen; the highest standards of ethics and integrity.

- The financial and operational acumen to fulfill short—and long-term goals, efficiently and effectively allocate resources, anticipate future funding needs, and guide an institution in a fiscally responsible way.
- Experience working with a team to lead successful fundraising efforts; ability to represent the School of Art compellingly to prospects and donors; development of strategies to support ambitious philanthropic goals; and energizing alumni and other stakeholders to support and champion the School.
- A deep and proven commitment to diversity and inclusion; experience working with and engaging diverse faculty, students, staff, and communities; and the capacity to create a harmonious, safe, and supportive environment that welcomes and respects all people, including but not limited to those who represent all racial, ethnic, religious, gender, gender-presentation, sexuality, geographic, cultural, ability, and socioeconomic groups.
- An earned terminal degree in a related discipline and experience in artistic practice that meet the qualifications for tenure as a full professor within the School of Art.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website:https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/carnegie-mellon-university-college-fine-arts/head-school-art. Electronic submission of materials is strongly encouraged.

Ben Tobin, Partner
Andy Marshall, Managing Associate
Isaacson, Miller

Carnegie Mellon University considers applicants for employment without regard to, and does not discriminate on the basis of, gender, race, protected veteran status, disability, or any other legally protected status.