**Stanford's McMurtry Building for the Department of Art & Art History**

***The third new arts building on campus in as many years when it opens to students in 2015***

Since committing to develop a university arts district in 2007, Stanford has delivered two of three new arts buildings joining [Cantor Arts Center](http://museum.stanford.edu/), Frost Amphitheater, Memorial Auditorium and [Stanford Art Gallery](https://art.stanford.edu/exhibition-spaces/stanford-art-gallery) in a concentration of arts spaces on either side of Palm Drive and near the Oval.

[Bing Concert Hall](http://live.stanford.edu/) opened in 2013 and the [Anderson Collection at Stanford University](http://anderson.stanford.edu/) opened this year. Now the most visible and audible construction project dominating the arts district is the [McMurtry Building](http://arts.stanford.edu/mcmurtry-building/), the new home to the Art & Art History Department and the Art & Architecture Library making the building an interdisciplinary hub for the arts at Stanford. It is on schedule for completion in summer 2015.

**Art history and art making**

The new art and art history facility, named in recognition of Deedee and Burt McMurtry, MS '59, PhD '62, will significantly enhance and expand the role the arts play throughout campus. Their $30 million gift toward the creation of the $85 million building is nothing short of transformative.

The design of the McMurtry Building was inspired by Stanford's classic campus quad to be a hub where students meet, mix and connect. The 96,000-square-foot building, with 24,000 additional square feet of courtyard space, will house courses and classrooms devoted to art study and practice under the same roof.

"While the building was inspired by the traditional arcaded courtyards of Stanford's historic buildings, its dramatic sculptural presence is unique on campus," said architect Charles Renfro of Diller Scofidio + Renfro, which designed the project with executive architect Boora Architects. "It is an architecture that both illustrates and contributes to the pedagogical practices of the multiple disciplines housed within."

To unite the two related but distinct populations of art history and art making, including programs in documentary filmmaking and a joint program in design co-taught with the School of Engineering, the architects envisioned a building comprising two strands that retain distinct identities but embrace and interlock to create opportunities for exchange, promoting discourse and collaboration between the disciplines.

And so, the art historical strand has a stucco exterior, a traditional and recognizable material on Stanford's campus that embraces the university's aesthetic and history. The art-making strand is both industrial and contemporary in appearance, with a custom zinc metal finishing.

The art and architecture library, the building's middle floor, is a "floating" glass box. The library supports both online and analog research, and there will be dedicated carrel space for doctoral students. At the intersection point between the two strands, where both staircases meet, the library offers views of every floor through the central glass oculus.

Adjacent to the Cantor, the McMurtry Building is porous and inviting, with a number of entryways to encourage informal engagement with the arts. Every angle of the structure offers a view into art study and practice, and reveals the diverse range of activity that can occur within the space. The entire building promotes transparency – its central oculus and transparent studio and classroom walls create encounters with art throughout, while a roll-up glass door feature allows art making and performances to spill outside.

Students' creativity is immediately showcased to visitors arriving through the formal entrance by a large display wall and adjacent gallery space. On the first floor, a 120-seat flexible presentation space can serve as a classroom with retractable seats, a performance space with acoustical walls or a gallery for presenting work. The space's glass door can be opened to host outdoor performances, or covered with screens of varying levels of opacity to accommodate projection for lectures as well as creative art purposes.

Other first-floor features are the sculpture studio and a dedicated screening room with raked seating that will be used principally for the documentary filmmaking program.

Though the classrooms and studios are multipurpose spaces with shades, projection and display capabilities, they are individualized by discipline to meet the varied and specific needs of each practice. The building's abundance of natural light is filtered into studios through a sophisticated frit pattern on the windows to create even light. Clouded glass walls admit light, but also offer privacy to students working within the space.

The faculty offices, located on the third floor, share a ribbon window at desk height that wraps around the building. The offices' clouded glass doors allow privacy, but also encourage engagement with students passing in the hallway.

The lower level of the building houses extensive photography darkrooms, computer labs and film editing rooms.

**Supporting the teaching mission**

Staff and faculty members have devoted hundreds of hours to make sure the new facility, including all of its equipment, will support the department's diverse programs and teaching mission. The program vision for the building is being developed with the leadership of the faculty, together with the office of the dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences and Stanford University Libraries & Academic Information Resources.

"Among the many challenges posed by the prospect of a new building is the need to imagine new and different ways of teaching," said Nancy J. Troy, chair of the [Department of Art & Art History](http://art.stanford.edu/). "Now, we and our students have an opportunity to rethink customary practices. The design features of the McMurtry Building encourage all of us to engage ever more intensively with one another to enhance our teaching, scholarship and creative practices."

Troy points out that the art-making studios will have more storage capacity than the current facilities in Cummings, enabling the department to make better and more efficient use of the new spaces so the faculty can offer more art practice courses and accommodate more of the demand for such courses among Stanford undergrads.

Take a [virtual architectural tour](http://arts.stanford.edu/mcmurtry-building/) of the McMurtry Building or view [renderings](http://arts.stanford.edu/mcmurtry-building/) on the Stanford Arts website.

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