

Kansas City Art Institute

Press Kit

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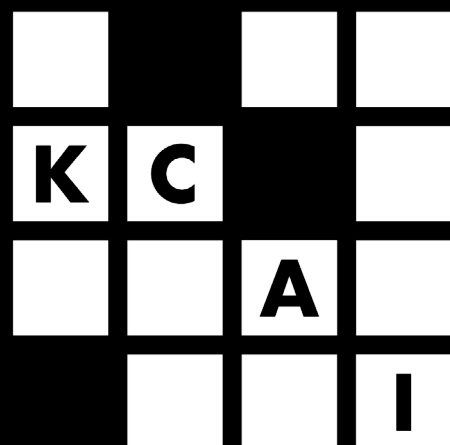


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KCAI Fact Sheet

Overview

Welcome to the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI), where the spirit of exploration, curiosity and passion defines our educational journey. From a humble home-based Sketch Club, we became the Kansas City Art Association and School of Design in 1885, the Fine Arts Institute in 1907, and renamed ourselves Kansas City Art Institute in 1920. Expanding through various locations, including the Deardorff Building and Vanderslice Mansion, KCAI now thrives as a private institution on a 16-acre campus, providing immersive studio experiences across 13 majors.

With a faculty of 120+ artists, we are dedicated to shaping passionate students into visionary creators, creative problem solvers, and global citizens. Nestled between the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, our campus is a “studio between two showrooms,” where impactful ideas evolve into acclaimed works. This is KCAI – where creativity meets education, and every story is a masterpiece in the making.

Academic Structure

- **Majors:** 13 B.F.A. Programs
- **Faculty:** 120+
- **Class Format:** 2/3 studio, 1/3 liberal arts; major chosen after first foundation year
- **Student-Teacher Ratio:** 10:1 average for personalized support
- **Class Sizes:** Majority of classes less than 25 students

Accreditations

- Higher Learning Commission (HLC), awarded a 10-year reaccreditation in spring 2017
- National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), awarded a 10-year reaccreditation in Spring 2022

Mission/Vision

- **Mission:** To prepare gifted students to transform the world creatively through art and design.
- **Vision:** To be an innovative leader in art and design education.

Values

- **Faculty Excellence:** 100% of our instructors are artists that contribute real-world insights and professional expertise.
- **Personalized Studios:** We minimize material transport with dedicated spaces tailored to students' needs.
- **Artistic Freedom and Innovation:** Empowering students to freely express by fostering innovation.
- **Technology Integration:** Students utilize cutting-edge equipment, including 3D printers, CNC routers, diverse kilns, focused fiber areas and a realistic digital loom.

Creative Bonds

- **Artistic Hub Proximity:** 200 yards from major art museums, immersing students in KC's vibrant creative scene.
- **Museum Partnerships:** Close ties to museums mean valuable internships, enriching practical experiences for students.
- **Sponsored Studio:** Local business partnerships provide students real-world experience.
- **Midwest Appeal:** A unique blend of a smaller city feel with diverse focus options.

Executive Management

- **Leadership:** Currently, two KCAI administrative executives are jointly leading KCAI: Brian Henke, Executive Vice President for Administration and Chief Financial Officer, and Allison Puff, Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs.
- **Board-Guided Excellence:** KCAI is governed by a committed Board of Trustees who navigate the mission, to prepare gifted students to transform the world creatively through art and design, with strategic precision and purposeful leadership.

Special Recognition & Awards

- Top 25 Animation Schools and Colleges in the Midwest by Animation Career Review
- Fulbright Scholar Top Producer
- Excellence in Best Adaptive Re-Use Award, awarded by Historic Kansas City (HKC)
- Kansas City Industrial Council's (KCIC) Sustainability Awards judging committee selected KCAI as a Silver Level recipient of the KCIC Sustainability Award.
- Barbara Marshall Residence Hall, Paul and Linda DeBruce Hall, the brand identity and other design projects have been recognized as the best of the best in 2021 regional competitions.

KCAI History & Highlights

Established in 1885

Explore Kansas City Art Institute's (KCAI's) riveting history, tracing its evolution from covert beginnings to a present characterized by creativity and innovation.

From Secret Sketch Club

In 1885, KCAI sprang to life as the Sketch Club, an underground society of artists that gathered in private homes. After its inaugural exhibition in 1887 support was gained from 12 benefactors, the hush-hush events later found a permanent home in the illustrious Deardorff Building at 11th and Main in downtown Kansas City.

To Magnificent Mansion

The iconic Vanderslice Mansion was built in the late 1800s as the home of August R. Meyer, the first President of the Kansas City Park Board. He used the house as a primary residence and commonly referred to it as "Marburg"; it remained occupied until 1927. In 1927, the house and land was purchased by a local business man named Howard Vanderslice and was donated to the Kansas City Art Institute. The primary function of the building was to house classrooms and studios, and later served as an administrative building for the college. An auditorium was added in 1930, designed by local architecture firm Wight and Wight. A neighborhood homes tour was established in the early 1980s as a fundraiser to support refurbishing Vanderslice Hall and undoing mid-century modernizations. These renovations were made possible by generous benefactors, donations, and community contributions. This beautiful mansion earned a spot on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

A Studio Between Two Showrooms

In 1933, the Nelson-Atkins Museum became KCAI's neighbor. Then, in 1992, the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art joined on the west side. KCAI sits between these two museums, acting as a bridge connecting contemporary trends with timeless classics.



Marburg, the home of August and Emma Meyer, in 1903. The residence became known as KCAI's Vanderslice Hall in 1928. ("The American Architect," August 8, 1903)

One Door to Rule Them All

Mineral Hall, affectionately dubbed the “Hobbit House” by students, stands as a historic architectural marvel. Constructed in 1903 and acquired by the institute in 1968, this building, an example of a Prairie School, boasts a unique blend of styles. Originally a residence, it now functions as an artistic foundation at KCAI. Its distinctive door is renowned as one of the most photographed doorways in Kansas City.

Dynamic Teaching Museum

Dedicated to artists, art, and ideas since 1999, the Artspace serves the mission of KCAI as a dynamic teaching museum, engaging students and introducing audiences to important contemporary art and artists. The Artspace is also home to KCAI’s permanent collection of fine art.

A Mysterious Gift Transforms

In 2015, KCAI received a mysterious and amazing gift of \$25 million. This generous donation has had a lasting impact on the institution, influencing its future in terms of funds, space and scholarships. Today, with 13 majors and a faculty of 120+ artists, KCAI stands as a clear example of how a substantial gift can empower students, equipping them with the tools and resources to bring their artistic visions to life.



KCAI campus showing Vanderslice Hall, David T. Beals III Studios for Art and Technology, Rowland Commons, Café Nerman, and Wylie Dining. (Michael Robinson, 2021)

An Experimental Gallery in the Heart of Campus

Launched in 2016 in the Crossroads District and relocated to the Tony Jones Studios on the main campus, the KCAI Gallery: Center for Contemporary Practice serves the mission of KCAI through collaborative, curriculum-based engagements with students, faculty, community and artists in residence. Our campus gallery presents curatorial outcomes of these engagements that include exhibitions, screenings, lectures, readings, and conversations. This site and related programs hold space for critical thought, reflection, and dialog about current social issues and global challenges in our world.

Diversity and Innovation at the Core

Committed to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Sustainability (IDEAS), KCAI formed the IDEAS Council in 2020, to inspire, develop, and promote an IDEAS-centric culture through advocacy, education, action-oriented initiatives, open dialogue, and information-sharing among the KCAI community. The Council exists for the purpose of providing all members of the KCAI community (administration, faculty, staff, and students) with a forum for sharing and developing IDEAS-related information and initiatives.

Board-Guided Excellence and Vision

As a not-for-profit institution, KCAI's mission is clear – to prepare gifted students to transform the world creatively through art and design. Governed by a committed Board of Trustees, KCAI navigates its mission with strategic precision and purposeful leadership. Its vision? To be an innovative leader in art and design education.

KCAI Hands-On

At KCAI, we prioritize hands-on internships and artist instructors because we value a method of education that seamlessly integrates concept, theory, and technique. Through our programs, students develop critical thinking skills while honing their abilities through tangible creation, be it a sculpture, an illustration, a video, or any other medium. We encourage experimentation, expansion, and transformation of ideas into reality, recognizing these as critical and transferable skills. By nurturing these principles, we ensure that our graduates emerge as thriving artists and designers equipped with a profound understanding of the mental and physical processes that underpin creative entrepreneurship and cultural interaction.

Real-world Experiences

We recognize the importance of providing students with real-world, hands-on experiences and enhanced training for successful careers. [The Professional Practice Center \(PPC\)](#) works with students to achieve their career goals and help prepare students for successful careers. [The Sponsored Studio](#) program creates partnerships with local businesses to provide unique educational experiences for students while also assisting business partners with a fresh approach to their research and development, creative communications, and business challenges.

Pioneering Tomorrow's Artistry

KCAI is committed to values that enhance the learning experience. All full-time instructors are practicing artists, ensuring real-world insights. They prioritize personalized studios, tailor spaces to students' needs and encourage artistic freedom.



KCAI ceramics student lowers ceramic bust into on-site Richard J. Stern Ceramics Studio kiln. (KCAI, 2018)

Student Enrollment

Our talented students come from across the country and around the world to study at KCAI. We are proud that 100% of students receive financial assistance through scholarships, grants, loans, student employment, and other financial aid programs. KCAI offers 13 studio majors taught by award winning faculty who are professional artists, designers and scholars. [Learn more about KCAI Academics.](#)

Key Statistics

- **Undergraduate Enrollment:** 789 (Fall 2023)
- **Acceptance Rate:** 60%
- **2024 –2025 Tuition & Fees:** \$44,750
- **Setting:** Urban
- **Campus Size:** 16-acre campus

Enrollment by Department, Fall 2023:



All first year students start in Foundation before choosing a major. KCAI also offers students 4 minors, Asian Studies, Entrepreneurial Studies, Social Practice and Sound. Students may also choose Art History or Creative Writing either as a double major with a studio minor or as a major with a studio minor.

Alumni

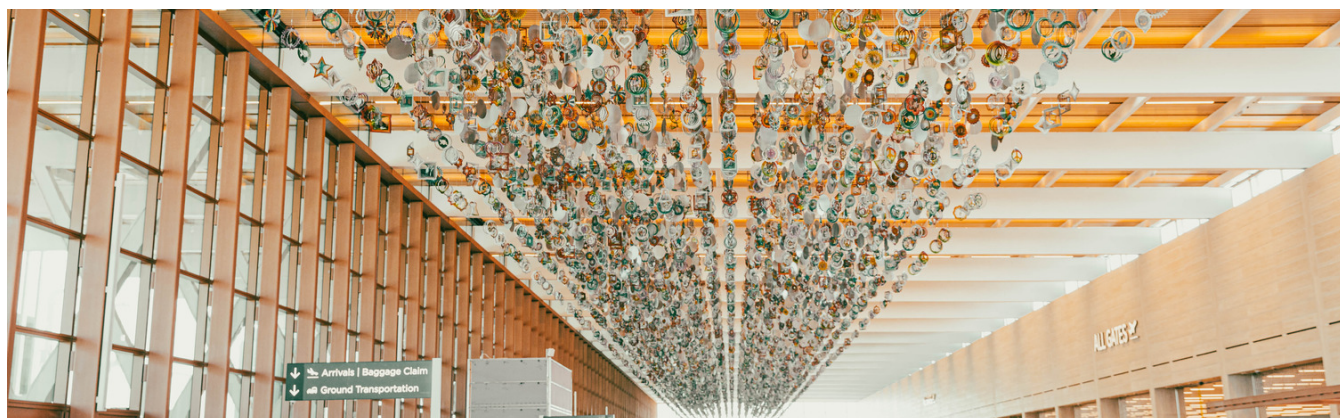
KCAI Alumni Success

Graduates of KCAI are working in a variety of industries and doing big things. These artists represent a fraction of the impactful alumni from the Kansas City Art Institute, demonstrating the institution's rich legacy in shaping the creative landscape.

Notable figures include:

- Walt Disney, an iconic animator and film producer renowned for revolutionizing American animation.
- Dennis Hopper is an American actor and film director, earning nominations for two Academy Awards, a Primetime Emmy, and two Golden Globes.
- Robert Rauschenberg, a pioneering painter and graphic artist whose works anticipated the Pop art movement.
- Thomas Hart Benton, a prominent painter and muralist associated with the Regionalist art movement.
- Victor Papanek, an advocate of socially and ecologically responsible design.
- Chris Pitman, a versatile musician known for his involvement with Guns N' Roses and other bands.
- April Greiman, a groundbreaking designer credited with embracing computer technology in design.
- Nick Cave, a sculptor, dancer, and performance artist renowned for his Soundsuit series.
- Sam Prekop, a musician known for his work with The Sea and Cake.
- Roberto Lugo, combines classical pottery forms and has been awarded a Pew Fellowship, Cynthia Hazen Polsky and Leon Polsky Rome Prize, and a US Artist Award.
- Whitney Manney, is transforming the aesthetics of street art and the impact of cultural movements on the contemporary urban landscape into wearable art and textile design, she was awarded the American Craft Council Emerging Artist Grant and the JOANN Fabrics Minority Creative Grant.

KCAI is proud of their alumni and offers exclusive benefits to graduates like mentorships, career advising, and networking opportunities. We encourage alumni to connect with us on social media and share their successes with the KCAI Alumni Community; alumni@kcai.edu.



Nick Cave ('82 Fiber), The Air Up There, Check-In Hall Ceiling at the Kansas City International Airport.

Visit & Connect

KCAI Campus

- [Virtual Experience](#): Take our virtual tour for an interactive map and KCAI stories.
- [Download Campus Map](#)
- Campus tours can be arranged through the media contact.

Campus Galleries

H&R Block Artspace and KCAI Gallery present innovative exhibitions, conversations, public programs, and commissioned projects that explore the artists, art, and ideas of our time. Engaging, educating, and inspiring the next generations of artists and designers.

- [KCAI Gallery: Center for Contemporary Practice](#):
Hours Thursday–Sunday: noon – 5 p.m. or by appointment
- [H&R Block Artspace](#): Hours Wednesday – Saturday: 12 – 5 p.m., Tuesday by appointment

Public Amenities

- [The Underground](#): Find the KCAI Art Supply Store, Mailroom, Print Center, and ArtCycle beneath the Tony Jones Studios ground floor. All services are open to the public and may just be the best-kept secret in KC.
- [Café Nerman](#): Enjoy KCAI's very own coffee shop, located next to the main entrance of campus. Café Nerman is one of the campus' go-to places for coffee, meetings, or study breaks. Wylie Dining is also open to the public offering six rotating food stations.
- [Jannes Library & Learning Center](#): Offering KCAI and the extended Kansas City community an extensive and growing library collection of over 30,000 volumes. Jannes Library also houses the KCAI Archives collection dating back to 1885.

Events & Programs

- [Events Calendar](#): For the latest on campus happenings.
- [KCAI Community Workshops](#): Non-degree-seeking adult studio workshops, open to the public with limited availability.

Stay Connected

Instagram: [@kcartinstitute](#)

Facebook: [Kansas City Art Institute](#)

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X: [@KCArtInstitute](#)

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