Kyra McLeod, Be Prepared, 2015, Acrylic and latex on wood
Included in "Iterations," the 2016 Visual Arts BFA exhibition at the University of Victoria

CREATIVE FUTURES

Collaborative Models
New Technologies
Interactive Media
Entrepreneurship
Start-Up Culture
Expanded Industry
Unique Facilities
The Graduates
Creative Futures looks at collaborative, interdisciplinary changes at art schools

Some 400,000 Canadians over the age of 25 have completed post-secondary studies in visual and performing arts programs, according to Statistics Canada. This is a staggering number, but not an entirely surprising one—other Stats Canada findings show that artists, as a group, routinely exhibit a higher level of educational achievement than the national labour force. Yet the art schools of today are almost unrecognizable from their earliest iterations, which opened in Canada beginning in the late 1800s. As artistic practices shift, increasingly integrating technology and interdisciplinary approaches, it makes sense that art schools reflect, or anticipate, these changes as well.

At some schools, more traditional studio-based programs are reinvigorating their approaches. At others, newly developed programs that are deeply future-facing take the visual and creative components of art school but apply them in different ways. In this School Guide, themed on Creative Futures, we home in on examples of unique programs and pedagogies across the country that are creating the artists of tomorrow.
The future of education is collaborative, with industry, non-profits and other universities. We embody this in our curriculum.

British Columbia

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
Visual Arts
“Rather than attempting to achieve mastery in one area, which is not likely in four years, we are of the opinion that creating well-rounded artists with an understanding of a range of materials and methods is key to developing unique and innovative artistic voices,” says Paul Walde, department chair of visual arts at the University of Victoria. To this end, the school offers third- and fourth-year students the chance to take atelier classes: intensive interdisciplinary studio courses that focus on highly individualized, self-initiated creative projects with professional practices and critical analysis.

EMILY CARR UNIVERSITY OF ART AND DESIGN
SPACE Minor
The SPACE minor (an acronym for Social Practice and Community Engagement), at Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver, offers students in any degree program the opportunity to supplement their studies by applying art and design to real-world issues and problems. With special focuses on social practice, ecology, sustainability, documentary practices or community projects, this program aims to “create bridges and engage students with citizen groups, industry, non-profit organizations, arts groups, the public-school system and other related organizations.”

CENTRE FOR DIGITAL MEDIA
Digital Media
“The future of education is collaborative, with industry, non-profits and other universities. We embody this in our curriculum,” explains Richard Smith, director of Vancouver’s Centre for Digital Media. “Students collaborate with industry, non-profits and university researchers on projects; and with companies in their internships.” Emphasizing experiential learning and encouraging start-ups, the school gives students access to all technologies required for the production of digital-media products. This includes 3-D printers, Wacom tablets, sound-editing and video-editing facilities, a green screen and sound stage.
Critically engaging with digital technologies, students expand their understanding of the complex relationships among technologies, art, design and industry.

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
New Media
The MFA in new media “emphasizes both scholarly and artistic research and creation and promotes an interdisciplinary approach to MFA projects,” says Dana Cooley, assistant professor in the department of new media, which also offers a BFA. “Critically engaging with digital technologies, students expand their understanding of the complex relationships among technologies, art, design and industry, positioning them to be effective potential future educators.” Student work is often deeply critical, with projects that “misuse” devices and employ technologies to overturn assumptions and conventions. Graduate assistantships are also offered to students, allowing them to contribute to the delivery of courses and gain a sense of what is involved in teaching.

ALBERTA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
Visual Communications Design
“Our program works to anticipate social and industry needs,” says Charles Bell, chair of ACAD’s school of communication design. “Our students expect their education to be current and relevant.” To this end, ACAD, located in Calgary, offers a four-year, studio-based baccalaureate of design, which has the recent addition of a business focus. “We implemented additional business and entrepreneurship instruction, introducing a second-year professional practice course and incorporating more business-related content into the curriculum,” says Bell. “This will prepare our graduates to be self-reliant entrepreneurs and content creators.”

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Computational Media Design
The University of Calgary’s computational media design program is deeply interdisciplinary, allowing students to research “at the intersection of art, music, dance, drama, design and computer science.” The program, which offers either an Master of Science (MSc) or a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree, “is a research-based program housed in the faculty of science rather than arts, and each of our students has two supervisors: one in computer science, and one in another CMD area, such as art,” explains John Aycock, director of the CMD program. “That gives our students mentoring from experts in multiple disciplines and gives them a structure in which they can perform interdisciplinary work.”
Manitoba

BRANDON UNIVERSITY
Aboriginal Art
The Aboriginal art program is one of the only accredited programs in the country that offers both a minor and major in Indigenous art and design. “Our program believes in the power of Indigenous creative practice and production,” says assistant professor Peter Morin. “We place these distinct histories beside the more traditional ones of painting, printmaking and drawing.” Combining studio-based classes in Indigenous art and technologies with innovative courses in Indigenous art history, the program includes a thesis-exhibition year or planning year, where students “plan, execute, and install their own solo exhibition in the Glen P. Sutherland Gallery of Art. Students often go on from this year to future opportunities, like artist residencies and masters programs.”

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA
Studio Art
“We redesigned the BFA program in 2010 to be as interdisciplinary as possible—opening up much more access to all our media areas and building in research opportunities as early as second year,” says Paul Hess, director of the school of art at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg. With concentrations in ceramics, drawing, graphic design, painting, video, sculpture, print media and photography, students are able to draw from a range of disciplines. “Traditional disciplines sit alongside contemporary technologies,” notes Hess. “This sends a signal to students. It provides easier access and invites the mixing of media forms and concepts.” And teaching methods at the university are similarly experimental, with the school combining traditional, skill-oriented teaching with visiting speakers, workshops, collaborative approaches, experiential learning and more.

Saskatchewan

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
Creative Technologies
“We focus on building future-proof skills, such as: creativity, curiosity, adaptability, ethical interdisciplinary collaboration, self-directed and online learning, historical and critical perspectives, social responsibility and the confidence to experiment with emerging technologies,” says professor Rebecca Caines. Offering major and minor options for undergraduate students, the creative-technologies program links new media, music and the visual arts to enable students to “grow conceptually and confidently shape the spaces of the future.” The program pulls from start-up culture, but Caines stresses that the faculty are “very wary of any kind of evangelical advocacy of new and shiny,” and instead encourage “communal skill-sharing, access to inexpensive or free technologies and the continued development of a bold, entrepreneurial spirit.”
Ontario

McMaster University
Sustainability Minor
With climate change looming as one of humanity’s greatest threats, art schools need to integrate sustainable practices. At McMaster, in Hamilton, “Faculty actively research and incorporate safer and more environmentally responsible materials, approaches and technologies into all coursework,” says Alison McQueen, director of the school of arts. “Our students learn methodologies designed to protect their own health in the studio while also contributing to the health of the environment.” The school’s studios adhere to guidelines that exceed governmental health-and-safety requirements, and programming tackles tough questions—in 2016, for example, a symposium focused on environmentally responsible print practices.

University of Waterloo
Global Business and Digital Arts
The global business and digital arts program combines creativity, technology and business. Split between the Waterloo and Stratford campuses, the program places an emphasis on project- and team-based learning, and students have access to business leaders who mentor them through in-class projects. The program offers courses in topics ranging from digital media to cross-cultural business, and students have access to the Stratford campus tech/business incubator, the Accelerator Centre, which offers mentorship and workshop programs.

Western University
Digital Humanities
The interdisciplinary digital-humanities program at London’s Western University was created “with the goal of adapting the humanistic mission of the university to the 21st century.” Though this mission focuses on the human condition, the program accounts for the increasing digitization of human life and its connections with a networked world and globalization, explains professor Juan Luis Suárez. The program involves creativity, knowledge and the critique of culture, and places an emphasis on hands-on learning. “Our pedagogy is guided by the idea that the actual and next generations learn mostly by doing,” notes Suárez.

Our pedagogy is guided by the idea that the next generation learns mostly by doing.
Toronto

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE
Centre for Arts, Design and Information Technology
Within the Centre for Arts, Design and Information Technology, a range of design and media-arts programs are offered with a strong emphasis on work-integrated learning. “We offer field placements for all of our programs, and industry mentors guide capstone projects and participate in professional-practice courses,” says Elise Hodson, the chair of the school of design. Beyond field placements, Hodson notes that “entrepreneurship and commercialization are increasingly incorporated in courses and in extra-curricular programs.” This includes product-development courses and a college-wide program called StarGBC that helps students develop prototypes and look for funding for their projects.

OCAD UNIVERSITY
Drawing and Painting: Digital Painting and Expanded Animation
OCAD University’s digital painting and expanded animation program “focuses on the relation of traditional and digital practices and attempts a critical dialogue between the two” says Philippe Blanchard, the associate chair. “We’re using art as a way to better understand our relationship to technology, how it shapes the reality we live in,” he says. Throughout the four-year program, students take a variety of courses that still involve traditional ways of working, but also get a handle on technology, from digital painting with Wacom tablets to using the school’s rapid-prototyping lab. The program makes experiential learning a required component, and emphasizes student participation in outreach initiatives.

YORK UNIVERSITY
Combined MBA/MFA in Visual Arts
“The in-depth theoretical and experiential knowledge of artistic and business practice offered by the combined degree program represents a critical asset for artists preparing to work in the cultural sector,” says Joyce Zemans, the chair of the joint master’s of fine arts and master’s of business administration program. With both visual-arts faculty, who represent contemporary artistic practices, and the Schulich School of Business faculty, who are leading researchers in numerous fields of business, the combined program—the only one of its kind in Canada—is “designed to address the rapidly changing global digital-media economy and the development of new business models in the cultural sector in an age of disruption.” Alumni have gone on to a range of arts-management positions, including, but not limited to, roles as policy-makers and organization leaders.

We’re using art as a way to better understand our relationship to technology, and how it shapes the reality we live in.
Quebec

DAWSON COLLEGE
Interactive Media Arts
“The future of education lies in offering students individualized, meaningful, hands-on and peer-based learning experiences,” says coordinator John Connolly. Located in Montreal, Dawson College offers a two-year media-arts program that sees students creating projects involving web art, computer modelling, mobile art, apps and more. In terms of tools, students have access to a reconfigurable Mac computer lab, projectors, soldering stations, 3-D printers and more. Despite the technology focus, the program’s emphasis “is squarely on creative self-expression and design,” says Connolly. “The underlying technologies themselves are considered important only to the extent that they allow students to create interesting works, or to illuminate challenging concepts.”

BISHOP’S UNIVERSITY
Arts Administration
“Our arts-administration program links art with business and prepares students to either market themselves as artists or enter the business side of the art world,” says Michele Murray, the dean of arts and science at Bishop’s University, located in Sherbrooke. The program includes an internship, which can help secure employment post-school. And, while at Bishop’s, students can take advantage of the campus entrepreneurship centre, which offers help with start-up ventures and ideas.

We want to help students understand the deep currents and paradigms of rapidly changing creative technologies, and art practice in general.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
Computation Arts
“The program’s perspective is that creative technologies are always changing,” says assistant professor Jonathan Lessard. “We want to help students understand the deep currents and paradigms of creative technologies, and art practice in general, to allow them to adapt to this rapid change, or even provoke it.” This BFA program at the Montreal school lies at the intersection of design, art and technology, and offers facilities such as wood and metal shops, 3-D printing passing and computer-assisted weaving. Lessard notes, “We want students to be more than software-users. We want them to understand the computational fabric of software, and enable them to imagine the future of software.”
Atlantic

NSCAD UNIVERSITY

Media Arts

At NSCAD University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the school’s media-arts division houses departments in photography, film and intermedia, with faculty in each department offering a shifting variety of courses informed by their diverse interests—and the increasingly malleable definitions of contemporary art. “The traditional boundaries between media have blurred with technologies such as 3-D printing. As a result, sculpture, installation and interactive media no longer fit neatly within discrete departments. NSCAD offers courses in electronics, microcontrollers, 3-D printing and animation,” says Adrian Fish, chair of the media-arts division. In addition to a range of material approaches, students benefit from “a rigorous schedule of national and international visiting artists with eclectic concerns”; inter-institutional partnerships with other universities, such as Dalhousie and Saint Mary’s University; and the growing entrepreneurial community in Halifax—such as Volta Labs, a local start-up incubator.

NEW BRUNSWICK COLLEGE OF CRAFT AND DESIGN

Aboriginal Visual Arts

The Aboriginal visual-arts program offers a unique focus on traditional learning of the Atlantic region, with particular attention to the traditional and contemporary crafts of the Mi’kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy peoples. Throughout the two-year program, students gain a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary overview of the visual arts, and exposure to the Fredericton college’s studios in ceramics, digital media, fashion design, graphic design and more. The program has an entrepreneurial focus, and as students select their area of focus—in fields such as ash and birchbark basketry or quillwork and beading—and hone their skills, their assignments help them create a strong portfolio of work.

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Fine Arts

Although Mount Allison’s fine-arts department largely focuses on traditional media, the addition of open-media classes offers a more interdisciplinary approach. “We recognize that contemporary art practices regularly combine disciplines. We developed our open-media classes to present students with non-discipline specific studio conditions, offering them the opportunity to mix media, explore the use of digital technologies, create performances and socially engaged projects, and pursue interdisciplinary connections outside of the fine-arts department,” says Leah Garnett, an associate professor in the fine-arts faculty. Through these open-media classes, students can freely work between studios, making use of the printmaking, sculpture, photography and digital-lab equipment at the school, which is located in Sackville, New Brunswick.

The traditional boundaries between media have blurred with technologies such as 3-D printing. As a result, sculpture, installation and interactive media no longer fit neatly within discrete departments.
As education changes, models for teaching change, too

Students are, increasingly, learning by doing

Hands-on education is a major asset post-graduation: some 80 per cent of employers surveyed by Leger Marketing for Universities Canada said that co-op and internship students are a strong source of future employees. Plenty of art-related programs have an internship component, but the hands-on, experiential approach to learning is often integrated into even the most basic of assignments. “Whether we are teaching history, ethics, philology or creativity, we put the student at the centre of the learning process,” notes Western University in London’s Juan Luis Suárez. “Our students learn history by programming their own code to collect or analyze data and text.”

Schools are placing more emphasis on working collaboratively

“We’re building alternative models to the idea of the ‘lone artist,’” says Rebecca Caines of the University of Regina. “In both artistic and technological fields, large-scale, responsive, competitive, high-calibre projects often require team-based project development. For us, collaboration is built into the program at all points.” This sentiment is shared, in different ways, at lots of Canadian schools. At Brandon University, the collaborative emphasis isn’t solely between students, but also with the community, as students and faculty bring Indigenous content and speakers to the larger public. One notable example: professor Cathy Mattes’s fundraising campaign to bring the collaborative, commemorative art project Walking With Our Sisters to the city. At Concordia University in Montreal, collaboration is given a multidisciplinary edge with teams from a range of disciplines coming together to work on final project studios. Collaboration extends to professors at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, where instructors are increasingly teaching in teams.

I aim to help students become excellent problem solvers, and I push them beyond the studio and classroom to develop initiatives and consider their own agency in a community and connecting with people. My own work involves both studio practice as well as curatorial and community practice. In 2012, I established a small experimental exhibition space, 180 Projects, to support local emerging artists, students and visiting artists, and to teach students about the presentation of artwork and practical skills of installation.

Algoma University’s mission to “cultivate cross-cultural learning between Aboriginal communities and other communities” is of particular importance to me—I work to engage students with the local land, materials and history, and provide students the opportunity to engage with materials from the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre that is housed at Algoma University.

— Andrea Pinheiro, Algoma University
Teaching methods are being reconsidered

Education these days has an entrepreneurial edge

The market reality facing graduates has spurred an emphasis on tangible workplace skills. “We implemented additional entrepreneurship instruction, and incorporated more business-related content into the curriculum,” notes Charles Bell of Calgary’s Alberta College of Art and Design. Bishop’s University in Sherbrooke, George Brown College in Toronto and the University of Waterloo have established start-up incubators, and NSCAD University in Halifax has forged partnerships with local entrepreneurial groups. But these developments must be handled carefully. “We’re wary of any evangelical advocacy of new and shiny,” says Rebecca Caines at the University of Regina. “Our pedagogy works with start-up culture and maker-culture models to encourage the smart utilization of distributed-production methods, communal skill-sharing, access to inexpensive technologies and the development of a bold entrepreneurial spirit.”

Often via appropriation and repetition, my work addresses ideas around human and non-human relations and the “other” through the lens of science, religion and popular culture. This blundering convergence of media culture with critical visual analysis is a methodology that translates into my teaching: I encourage students to critically engage their unique intersections with both actual and virtual spaces, and to allow them to permeate and become entangled with their visual practices.

— Nicole Rayburn, Yukon School of Visual Arts

Gone are the days when art-school materials consisted solely of paint, palettes and some canvas. From Wacom tablets to CNC milling machines, art schools across the country are introducing new technologies into the classroom. “It’s hard not to find a 3-D printer on campus,” laughs the University of Calgary’s John Aycock.

Here are some particularly noteworthy options:

1. The world’s tallest Christie MicroTile wall, a three-storey high digital display, is at the University of Waterloo’s Stratford Campus, and students can project their work onto it.

2. Schulich’s NOESIS lab at York University in Toronto facilitates state-of-the-art research into behaviour and product design, so students in the joint MBA/MFA can take a different kind of approach to audience engagement.

3. YouTube opened its first Canadian Creator Space, a 3,000-square-foot-plus studio for digital content, at George Brown College in Toronto earlier this year.

4. One of only two operating foundries, useful for bronze and aluminum casting, at Ontario universities can be found at McMaster University in Hamilton.

5. Traditional techniques benefit from contemporary technology in Calgary at the Alberta College of Art and Design, which houses a digital loom that facilitates computerized hand-weaving.

6. At the New Brunswick College of Craft and Design in Fredericton, students have access to a full camera track and green-screen equipment.

Interdisciplinary approaches help prepare students for the workforce

Artists increasingly work across many forms media, and silos within art schools are breaking down. In Halifax, NSCAD University offers an interdisciplinary major, while open-media classes at Sackville’s Mount Allison University gives students flexibility. Even seemingly specific programs, such as OCAD University in Toronto’s digital painting and expanded animation program, facilitate a range of media: time-based, digital, installation and more. Toronto’s George Brown College has a think tank, the Institute Without Boundaries, dedicated to interdisciplinary work, which offers a post-graduate certificate. “We feel that specializing students in one specific existing pipeline, while possibly beneficial in the short-term in terms of employment, can hinder their longer-term growth,” notes assistant professor Jonathan Lessard from Concordia University in Montreal.
The Graduates

Art-school grads are moving on to great careers as well as making their own jobs. Across media and across the country, they’re defining the shape of 21st-century creative careers.

1. Meghan Hunter-Gauthier, assistant curator, Two Rivers Gallery
   After graduating from the arts administration and cultural management certificate program at Humber College, I moved to Prince George, British Columbia, to undertake a contract with Two Rivers Gallery as acting assistant curator. Within this role I have been coordinating, sourcing and curating exhibitions for the Rustad Galleria, an exhibition space dedicated to emerging artists; working alongside the gallery’s curator to plan and install shows; supporting grant writing, submissions and more. I enrolled in the Humber certificate program because I wanted to develop important and practical skills that are required in the contemporary art world. Though my BFA taught me a lot about thinking critically, I wanted to learn about financial management, marketing and grant writing. The program was fast-paced and got me into the workforce quite quickly.

2. Miles Collyer, coordinator, career development at OCAD U
   In 2015 I graduated from the MFA/MBA program at York University and the Schulich School of Business. Since graduation, I have expanded my personal art practice, with solo exhibitions at Paul Petro Contemporary Art and YYZ Artists’ Outlet; taken up a full-time position at OCAD University; and continued in my role as vice-president of the board of Mercer Union. The arts and media administration MBA specialization at Schulich is incredible. I recommend it to anyone interested in the cultural and non-profit sector who wants to really challenge themselves personally and provide a springboard for career advancement. I now think differently and more strategically about every challenge that I encounter and I approach my work with colleagues, collaborators and even friends with a greater sense of appreciation for the multiple viewpoints that must be considered when working on a project or problem-solving an issue.

3. Raghed Charabaty, filmmaker and editor
   I graduated with a BFA from NSCAD University, and immediately went into pre-production for my new film, Yasmine, the third in a trilogy. I’ve also been working as an editor in an emerging production company, among other freelance work. At NSCAD, I worked hard at learning the technical aspects of indie filmmaking, and at developing a style for my films. My first student short, Alia, won three national awards and screened at more than 25 international film festivals; my second film, #Deema, premiered at the Cannes Festival in 2016. I’m grateful to have had the support of my professors and peers—it was a challenging four years on so many levels, especially when you’re making “foreign” films, but that’s exactly what builds you up and teaches you how to deal. In film there is only so much you can learn from a mentor. The bulk of it lies in forging your own understanding of your practice—aesthetically, politically, contextually.

4. Eszter Burghardt, artist
   Since graduating from the fine-arts program at Langara College, I have been working as a full-time artist exhibiting across Canada and the US. After graduation I went on to complete a BFA and for several years I travelled to

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1 Meghan Hunter-Gauthier

Though I work in a rather large regional gallery, our staffing is quite modest, with only two full-time curatorial staff members. This means that I have to play a lot of different roles. — Meghan Hunter-Gauthier

2 Miles Collyer
The bulk of filmmaking lies in forging your own understanding of your practice and how you wish to deal with it aesthetically, politically and contextually. — Raghed Charabaty

The National Theatre School's focus on fine art is necessary—the drawing and painting classes really teach you to see everything. Its classes on set and costume design are usually focused separately, so you can really give 100 per cent of your attention to one area of design and learn not to neglect the other. — Jenna McCutchen
School Guide

Canadian Art’s School Guide advertisers offer a diverse range of art-education programs. For a list of art schools across the country, visit canadianart.ca/schoolguide

Algoma University
algomau.ca
Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity
banffcentre.ca
Bishop’s University
ubishops.ca
Brandon University
brandonu.ca
Brock University
broku.ca
Centre for Digital Media
thecdm.ca
Concordia University
concordia.ca
Emily Carr University of Art and Design
ecuad.ca
Fanshawe College
fanshawec.ca
Haliburton School of Art and Design
flemingcollege.ca/school/haliburton-school-of-art-and-design
Humber College
humber.ca
Langara College
langara.ca
Laurentian University
laurentian.ca
MacEwan University
macewan.ca
Memorial University
mun.ca
Nipissing University
nipissingu.ca
NSCAD University
nscad.ca
OCAD University
ocadu.ca
Ottawa School of Art
artottawa.ca
Queen’s University
queensu.ca
Seneca College
senecacollege.ca
Sheridan College
sheridancollege.ca
Sheridan College Art and Art History
academics.sheridancollege.ca/programs/art-and-art-history
Simon Fraser University
sfu.ca
Toronto School of Art
tsa-art.com
University of British Columbia
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yukonsova.ca

Bryn Hewko  crawl space (an immersive film for Head Mounted Display)  2014–16  Physical construction, 3-D videography and Oculus Rift  COURTESY UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE