

The Carleton Arts Center: Creativity as a Habit of Being

The new Carleton Arts Center is not just for artists. It is both the symbol of, and the workshop for, a transformative vision of the College's mission. If ideas are the currency of the future, then the college that places creativity at the center of its curriculum develops in its students the core quality necessary to succeed in the 21st century. And it is the Arts which are uniquely positioned to foster in Carleton students—whether they be future physicists, dancers, or economists—creativity as a habit of being.

We do not embark upon this extraordinary capital and construction project simply because the Arts have been previously under-funded at Carleton. Nor do we take up this challenge because our arts facilities are inadequate and deteriorating. Rather, we initiate a new vision of the arts at Carleton because we believe that creativity is essential to all fields, and that a cardinal element of a liberal arts education is the ability to think about the world in original terms. Einstein famously said it was not abstract thinking but “the gift for fantasy” that led him to his scientific breakthroughs, and it is that faith in imagination—in the disassembly of the world and its reconstruction in new and startling configurations—that lies at the heart of artistic endeavor. Whether because they experience the struggle to invent a character in an acting lab, or to create new sounds in music composition, or to use emerging 3D graphics to explain compound physical properties in a chemistry lab, the students who have passed through the studios and workshops of the new Arts Center will be better prepared to engage the world with imagination and daring. That is the goal of the Arts initiative: to make creativity as a habit of being the signature quality of a Carleton education.

The Arts Planning Committee
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