

Art and Design Education that Matters (4/08)

Through art and design education, Otis prepares talented students to enrich our future. Communication Arts, highlighted in this issue, exemplifies this mission. Kali Nikitas, Department Chair, sums it up well in describing the new MFA Graphic Design Program: “Otis is an institution that prides itself on reaching out to the community and advancing culture through art and design. (The curricula) speak directly to educating conscientious individuals who believe that design has the power to contribute to and shape our world.”

An Otis education combines the vision, values, and skill sets that enable our graduates to excel and make a difference in the 21st century. First and foremost, Otis students become artists and designers with a personal voice. Essential to their artistic preparation are elements of a well-rounded and contributing life. These include a commitment to community well-being on a local and global scale; a conviction that art and design matters socially, culturally, and economically; a fundamental appreciation of and ability to navigate fluidly and resourcefully in a complex and diverse world; the capacity to communicate and collaborate; and a hunger for experimentation and innovation.

Over its 90-year history, Otis has developed this pedagogical approach as an organic response to its context - the unique phenomenon that is Los Angeles, the most futuristic of all American cities. The characteristics described above, innate to Otis, are gaining widespread recognition in both higher education and employment sectors as essential factors for success in any field. Otis is proud to be a leader in defining an art and design curriculum for the 21st Century.

The more we understand the past, the further we can advance. As Otis contemplates its future, the College and its faculty unabashedly embrace new technologies and emerging disciplines. At the same time, historical knowledge and time-honored practices continue to anchor teaching and learning. On campus, I am always heartened to see students being equally delighted by and adept at bookbinding and computer graphics.

At Otis, art and design matters, and innovation springs from tradition.