

In nature, rushing river waters occasionally form an oxbow, carving out a path that exposes new shores and reveals the surrounding environment from perspectives previously unseen.

Mission

The Oxbow School is an innovative, interdisciplinary semester program for high school students. Our mission is to strengthen students' abilities in creative and critical inquiry by combining rigorous studio art practice with innovative academics.

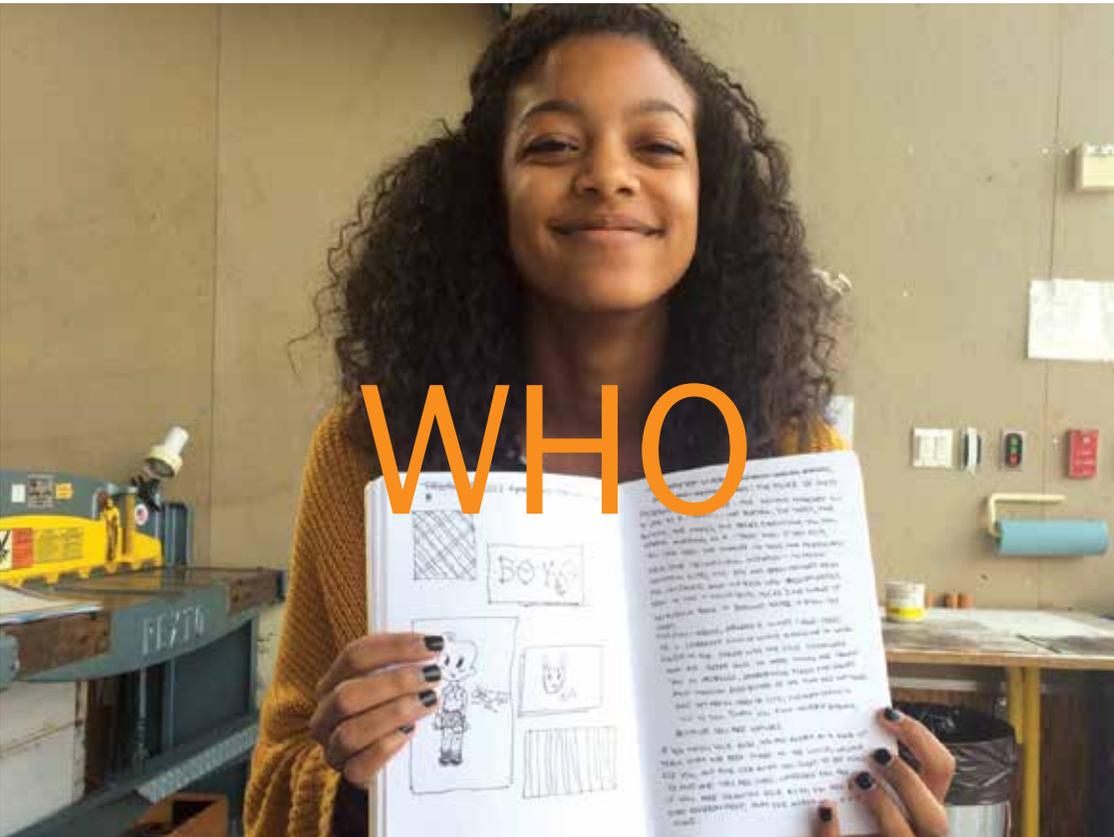
The Oxbow campus is located on the banks of the Napa River in Northern California. Students enjoy an inspirational natural environment while still having access to all the amenities of downtown Napa, which is just a short stroll from campus. We are located forty-five minutes from San Francisco, one hour from the Pacific coast, and within a few hours of many state and national parks.

The Oxbow semester is an intense exploration of artistic inquiry combined with the rigorous academics necessary to complete high school on time and be well-prepared for

college. At Oxbow, studio art and academic topics are interwoven so that the experience of research, writing, and making art becomes an internalized working model for personal growth. Socially, the students encounter peers from all over the country and all walks of life; most of our students rise to a new level of personal growth during their time here.

Oxbow also offers a Summer Art Camp for younger teens, which can be a wonderful stand-alone experience or an enriching way to prepare to spend a semester with us.





WHO

“My semester at Oxbow transformed my life. I felt totally prepared for college, completely comfortable with myself, and fully able to tackle any challenges that were thrown at me. These feelings were never present before I went to Oxbow, and I thank the semester program every day for preparing me for my first steps into adult life.”

—Lauren Steinberg, New York, NY, *student*

“Oxbow opened me up to what was out there in the world to go out and grab, and gave me so much that I take with me everywhere I go, with everything I do.”

—Nina Palomba, Jackson, WY, *student*



WHERE

“Our son’s entire experience at Oxbow was transformative...the school made a tremendous difference in his life. It was the turning point in his high school experience, and he returned to Packer Collegiate a stronger student and person as a result. I’ve said this before—but his acceptance at NYU is a tangible proof that what he and we have believed since he returned is a fact.”

—Bill Wadsworth, New York, NY, *parent*

“Oxbow gave Will a voice and a community. Under the nurturing attention of his wonderful teachers, he learned that he had the intellectual capability to express himself and that his unique point of view was, in fact, an asset.”

—David Becker, Berkeley, CA, *parent*



Vision



A school like no other.

Art philanthropist Ann Hatch and Napa Valley vintners Robert and Margrit Mondavi founded The Oxbow School in 1998 as the nation's first, and still the only, art-focused semester boarding program for high school juniors, seniors, and gap-year students.

The inspiration to start such a school grew out of Ann Hatch's observation that high schools tend to give short shrift to art courses, even to the point of considering art unnecessary in secondary education. Art museums and galleries too, lacked hands-on educational programs for young artists. Through her years in the contemporary art world Hatch noted

that visual learners often feel restless and estranged from the traditional approach to education. Hatch's idea was to create a studio-based environment where artists and students would collaborate in the practice of artistic inquiry and academic research. The Mondavis, who worked tirelessly to make the Napa Valley a celebrated center for wine, food and the arts, quickly saw how such a school would enrich the vibrancy of the Napa community and culture.

In the mid-1990s, Hatch and the Mondavis acquired a three-acre site on Third Street, overlooking an oxbow bend in the Napa

River, and commissioned Modernist architect Stanley Saitowitz to design a campus with free-standing studios. Painting and Drawing, Printmaking, Sculpture, and Photography/New Media are each housed in their own fully-equipped 1,250-square-foot building, featuring 18-foot high ceilings and expansive glass 'garage' doors that let in the north light and roll up to an inspiring view of the river. Today, the Oxbow campus consists of student dormitories, faculty housing, and a communal dining hall in the historic Scaruffi House.

Oxbow has also expanded its reach to include a summer art camp for younger teens, and an

artist lecture series open to the public. Oxbow has become a vital hub for the visual arts in the Napa community.

Oxbow's reputation has been growing nationally and internationally as well. Over the past decade, Oxbow has become a destination for top university and art college admissions representatives who find the caliber of Oxbow alumni truly impressive—so much so, that many Oxbow alumni have received substantial merit scholarships based on their portfolios and academic accomplishments.

Flexible Thinking for an Unknowable Future

by Stephen Thomas
Founding Director and Head of School



As the nation's only art-focused semester boarding school for high school students, Oxbow represents a unique educational model. It started with a belief in the impact that contact with artists could have on young minds, whether or not they became artists. We set out to create a stimulating environment—people, curriculum, and facilities—on a beautiful site that is conducive to fostering student growth. We believe that putting students, artists, and teachers together in a coherent interdisciplinary context that fuses the life of the mind with the skills of the hand, leads to habits of lifelong learning that cultivate empowered and productive lives. Immersive studio art practice and direct contact with artists are potent ways to engage students at this moment in their lives. These experiences wed intellect with passion and help students identify what may be, at this stage, only a 'hobby' or 'interest' as the main vector of their adult lives. Making art is a way of understanding their sense of self, validating their lived experience, and making sense of the complex world around them.

At Oxbow, it is the first day of school for everyone. Students have no history and they can be who they need to be, unburdened by a circle of friends, or teachers, or parents who may not be ready or able to understand their emerging personae.

The Oxbow pedagogy of project-based experiential learning is grounded in Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences; we use every modality in our classroom, providing multiple points of entry for each project assignment. We see teaching as co-learning, and as a faculty, we model by nurturing the collaborative skills and habits of mind that we want our students to acquire—critical thinking, engagement with the process, work ethic, studio habits, presentation of work. Students are held to rigorous standards, and are required to assess themselves in both their academic and studio performance.

Students leave Oxbow with the acquisition and ownership of a 'tool kit' that can be reconfigured to meet the challenges of ever-changing goals and environments.

The brief, intensive eighteen-week semester is a crucible experience, an extended rite of passage. Most students are living away from home for the first time, doing something very difficult without the support of friends and family. At the end of the semester, upon completion of their Final Projects, they walk away fully empowered by the scope of what they have accomplished, realizing that, "I did that for myself, and by myself, and now I can do it in the world."



Eating and sleeping.

All Oxbow students live on campus in dorm suites for the semester. Each suite has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a washer and dryer, and common room. Students live and study in close contact with staff and faculty, mentored and supported by our residential life team. Oxbow faculty members live on campus and provide a 24-hour presence, 7-days a week.

You will probably never eat as well at any school as you will at Oxbow. Our chefs are as artful as our faculty. With fresh produce—some of it harvested from Oxbow’s own gardens—organically grown, seasonal and from sustainable sources, students have three full, nutritious meals a day during the week and brunch and dinner on weekends. The Oxbow chefs take students on a tour of the world’s cuisines over the course of the semester.

“Oxbow is the truest community I have ever been a part of. Every student is always there for you, every teacher always has your back, every moment is spent together and everyone feels at home even though we are away from home.”

—Zoe Nyberg-Powell, Minnetonka, MN, student





“We’ve noted that our students often return more mature, independent, and able to apply higher level thinking skills and make connections in new ways. Many form relationships at Oxbow that continue into their college years and beyond, and they definitely create work that is portfolio- and college-ready. The Oxbow experience is a must for any student passionate about the visual arts.”

—Kathleen Marsh, *Boston Arts Academy*

Each Semester at Oxbow is unique, and our students are always engaging in exciting activities and field trips. Extracurricular opportunities at Oxbow have included visits to museums and artist studios, camping trips, hiking, biking, kayaking, volunteering at a local pet shelter, surfing, gardening, and learning how to make wood-fired pizza. Each semester students have the opportunity to propose and organize new activities and social events.



Every student unique.

Oxbow enrollment is limited to 48 students per semester. Students come from across the country and from diverse social, economic, religious, political and ethnic backgrounds. Of the more than 1,200 juniors, seniors, and gap-year students who have come through Oxbow since 1999, about an equal number have come from public and private schools. Some have previously attended boarding schools, and others are experiencing living away from home for the first time. Some students are already accomplished artists and others have never been exposed to the studio arts.

At Oxbow, not every student plans to pursue a career in art or design; some look towards entering fields like medicine, education, urban planning, economics, environmental science, engineering, business, and public policy. What draws them to Oxbow is the idea of learning through the process of making and creating, and viewing academic studies through the lens of art to better understand their interconnectedness and relevance to everyday life.

Student Life



Ready to go.
Oxbow looks upon the semester program as a first-step in a post-secondary school career. The Oxbow curriculum revolves around art, but the goal is to help students develop critical thinking skills, value themselves as individuals, and accept responsibility for their own creative choices—no matter what field they enter.



Oxbow's reputation for excellence has spread across the country attracting students from diverse schools and communities.

SENDING SCHOOLS*

- Alaska**
- Sitka High School
- Steller Secondary School
- Arizona**
- Museum School for the Visual Arts
- California**
- Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Berkeley High School
- Branson School
- Calistoga Junior/Senior High School
- Campolindo High School
- Canyon Crest Academy
- Castilleja School
- Central Los Angeles High School No. 9
- Convent of the Sacred Heart
- Crystal Springs Uplands School
- Cupertino High School
- Drew College Preparatory School
- Gateway High School
- Head-Royce School
- Idyllwild Arts Academy
- Lick-Wilmerding High School
- Los Altos High School
- Los Angeles County High School for the Arts
- Marin Academy
- Maybeck High School
- Mendocino Community High School
- Menlo-Atherton High School
- Miramonte High School
- Monte Vista High School
- Napa High School
- Nevada Union High School
- New Technology High School
- Oakland School for the Arts
- Palo Alto High School
- Piedmont High School
- Sacred Heart Preparatory
- San Francisco School of the Arts
- San Francisco University High School
- Santa Barbara High School
- Santa Rosa High School
- Sir Francis Drake High School
- Sonoma Valley High School
- St. Helena High School
- Tamalpais High School
- Tamiscal High School
- Terra Linda High School
- The Bay School of San Francisco
- The Marin School
- The Urban School of San Francisco
- Vintage High School
- New Technology High School

- Colorado**
- Ridgway High School
- Telluride High School
- Connecticut**
- Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts
- Kent School
- New Canaan High School
- District of Columbia**
- The Field School
- Florida**
- Alexander W. Dreyfoos Jr. School of the Arts
- Design and Architecture Senior High School
- Georgia**
- Holy Innocents Episcopal School
- The Lovett School
- Holy Innocents Episcopal School
- Pace Academy Atlanta
- Rabun Gap-Nacoochee School
- The Lovett School
- The Paideia School
- The Westminster Schools
- Woodward Academy
- Hawaii**
- Mid-Pacific Institute
- Illinois**
- Francis W. Parker School
- Lake Forest High School
- University of Chicago Lab School
- New Trier Township High School
- North Shore Country Day School
- Louisiana**
- Metairie Park Country Day School
- New Orleans Charter Science and Math Academy
- Maine**
- Camden Hills Regional High School
- Massachusetts**
- Freeport High School
- Maryland**
- The Bryn Mawr School
- The Key School
- Massachusetts**
- Beaver Country Day School
- Boston Arts Academy
- Concord Academy
- Nantucket High School
- Phillips Academy Andover
- Michigan**
- Black River High School
- Marian High School
- Interlochen Center for the Arts
- Minnesota**
- Mounds Park Academy
- South High School
- SouthWest High School
- St. Paul Academy and Summit School
- The Blake School
- Breck School
- Missouri**
- St. Louis Country Day School
- Montana**
- Bozeman High School
- New Hampshire**
- Hanover High School
- Phillips Exeter Academy
- New Jersey**
- Montclair High School
- Newark Academy
- The Pingry School
- New Mexico**
- Albuquerque Academy
- Albuquerque High School
- Bosque School
- Desert Academy

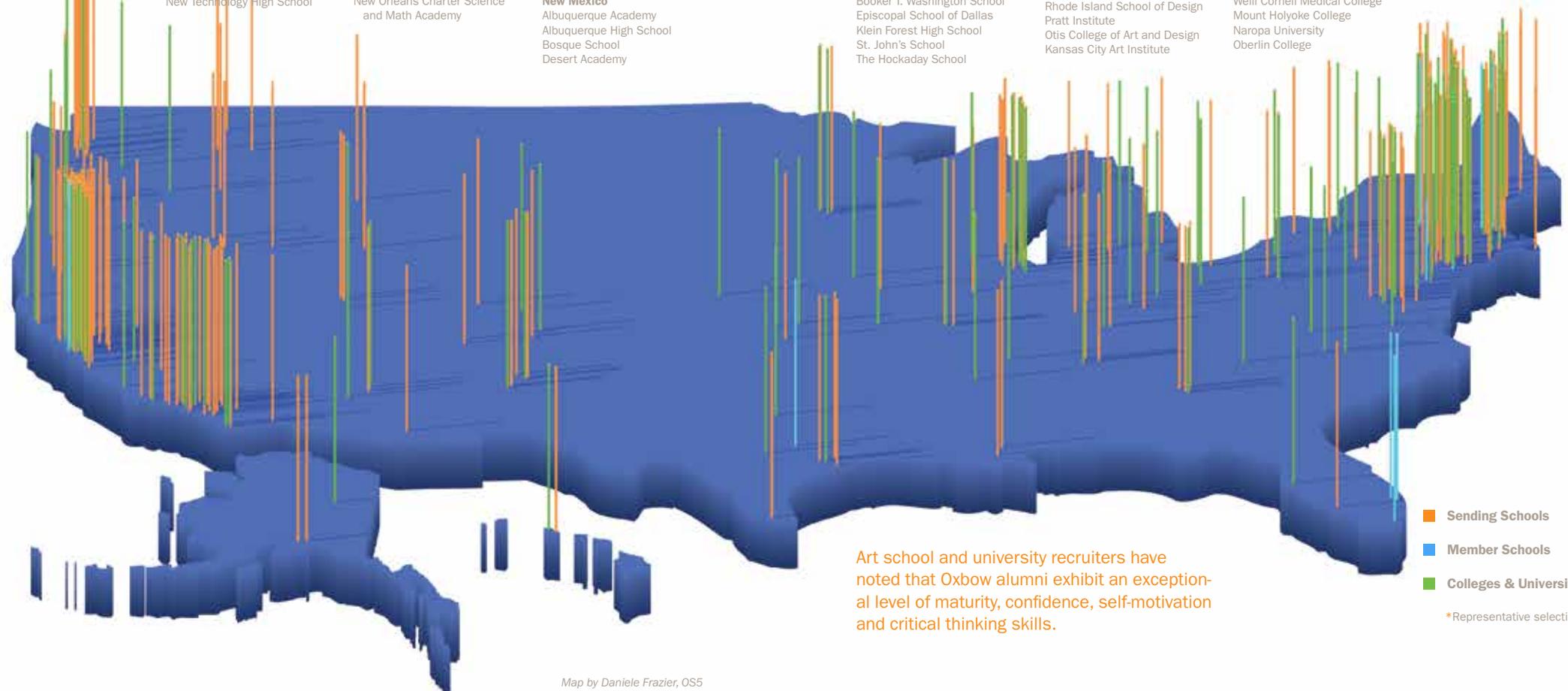
- New Mexico School of the Arts
- Sandia Preparatory School
- Santa Fe High School
- Santa Fe Preparatory School
- New York**
- Brooklyn Friends School
- Ethical Culture Fieldston School
- School of Music & Art and Performing Arts
- Horace Mann School
- Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics
- Riverdale Country School
- Rye High School
- The Berkeley Carroll School
- The Masters School
- The Nightingale-Bamford School
- The Packer Collegiate Institute
- Trevor Day School
- Oregon**
- Lake Oswego High School
- St. Mary's Academy
- Pennsylvania**
- Chestnut Hill Academy
- Germantown Friends School
- Sewickley Academy
- The Haverford School
- Rhode Island**
- Block Island School
- Providence Country Day School
- The Wheeler School
- Tennessee**
- Nashville School of the Arts
- The Harpeth Hall School
- Texas**
- Booker T. Washington School
- Episcopal School of Dallas
- Klein Forest High School
- St. John's School
- The Hockaday School

- Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- Maryland Institute College of Art
- Cornish College of the Arts
- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
- Pacific Northwest College of Art
- Savannah College of Art and Design
- PRIVATE COLLEGES**
- Mills College
- Smith College
- The New School
- Yale University
- Bennington College
- University of Chicago
- Pomona College
- Pitzer College
- Reed College
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- Colorado College
- Columbia University
- Vassar College
- Harvard University
- Stanford University
- Bowdoin College
- Dartmouth College
- Georgetown University
- Hampshire College
- Sarah Lawrence College
- Macalester College
- Barnard College
- Skidmore College
- Washington University
- Weill Cornell Medical College
- Mount Holyoke College
- Naropa University
- Oberlin College
- Lewis & Clark College
- Beloit College
- Rice University
- DePaul University
- Johns Hopkins
- STATE UNIVERSITIES**
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Los Angeles
- Michigan State University
- State University of New York
- University of Colorado
- University of Pennsylvania
- University of Oregon
- University of New Mexico
- University of Minnesota
- University of Michigan

- INTERNATIONAL**
- Emily Carr University of Art and Design
- Kyoto Seika University Japan
- Bauhaus Germany
- St. Louis University in Madrid
- University of Derby, United Kingdom
- American University in Rome
- Kings College London
- Royal College of Art London
- Central St. Martins
- University of St. Andrews Scotland
- Camberwell College of Arts
- Aegean Center for the Fine Arts Greece

COLLEGES*

- ART COLLEGES**
- The Cooper Union
- School of the Art Institute of Chicago
- San Francisco Art Institute
- Fashion Institute of Technology
- Parsons School of Design
- California College of the Arts
- California Institute of the Arts
- School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts University
- Art Center College of Design
- Tisch School of the Arts, New York University
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Pratt Institute
- Otis College of Art and Design
- Kansas City Art Institute



Art school and university recruiters have noted that Oxbow alumni exhibit an exceptional level of maturity, confidence, self-motivation and critical thinking skills.

- Sending Schools
- Member Schools
- Colleges & Universities
- *Representative selection



“Oxbow forced me to create, and by creating,

I established foundation for my thought.”

—Jamie Roux, South Freeport, ME, student



“We don’t set up a technique and have students follow it. We teach thinking for yourself. We propose aesthetic and intellectually challenging projects that they have to solve in their own individual way. I don’t give my students a specific material to work with. I give them the same problem and they solve it in different ways. At Oxbow, you can’t fall through the cracks. Every student receives very individual attention. You can’t ‘disappear’ even if you want to.”

—Patrick Foy, *Founding Instructor*



“I have never before been so alive with curiosity, creativity, and adoration of every subject I was learning. Being a part of such a creative educational community allowed my imagination the space to explore the endless possibilities of creation. I was challenged and motivated by my teachers and peers on a daily basis to think outside the box and work hard, and that hard work paid off in immeasurable ways.”

—Glenn Sherwin, *Richland Center, Wisconsin, Student*



All coursework at Oxbow is accredited, honors level, and designed to prepare students for the college experience.

Oxbow curriculum.

While Oxbow is known as one of the best art programs in the United States for teens, it is also well known for having innovative academics. Students who attend Oxbow take a full academic course load, stay on track for high school graduation, and increase their chances of being accepted and earning scholarships to their top-choice colleges.

Art

The multi-discipline Studio Art course at Oxbow School guides students through a series of carefully conceived assignments that build skills and provide instruction in painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, photography, and new media. Over the course of the semester, students develop a critical eye, an individual voice, and a working knowledge of issues in contemporary art. Students learn to manage their time, understand their creative process, and expand their aesthetic thinking while growing as a community of artists. The Oxbow

art curriculum focuses on student driven ideas and concepts and encourages students to experiment with various media. During the last month of the semester students pick their own topics and create an artwork, or body of work in any medium. The semester ends with a public art exhibition, at which students make a formal presentation sharing the research and critical thinking that informed their Final Project.

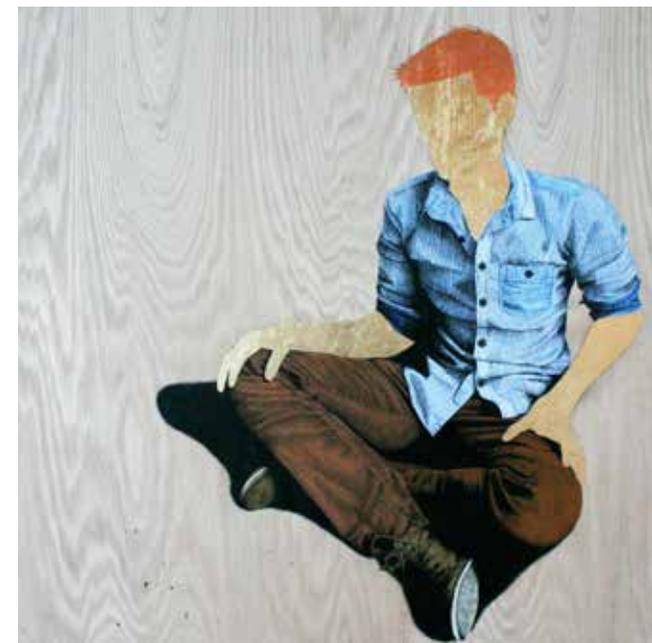
Academics

The Oxbow curriculum is designed to fulfill the requirements of the nation's best public and private high schools and is as much about academics as it is about creating art. Core courses include English, US History, Environmental Science, Math, and Studio Art. Language tutorials are available for those who want it. A full description of our course offerings can be found in our Curriculum Packet.



Mixed media, fortune cookie project, by Elena Silvestrini

“I saw how 18 weeks at Oxbow changed the kids’ lives in terms of confidence. They are committed, poised and have been through a process that gave them authenticity, it gave them a voice. Magic happens in those 18 weeks at Oxbow. Kids come out different human beings, better citizens of the world. It’s really powerful.”
—Bonnie Levinson, former Oxbow Board Member



Mixed media Final Project by Alex Baleno



Learning in practice.

The Oxbow approach to education is not textbook-driven or simply theoretical; it is based on creating situations where students learn by discovering on their own. An example is Oxbow’s garden-to-classroom-to-kitchen program, which spans the gamut from organic farming and sustainable agriculture to understanding ecological interdependence, scientific inquiry, nutrition, and social activism. What students grow is turned into delicious meals by Oxbow chefs, who emphasize daily menus that feature organic and seasonal produce and other locally-sourced ingredients.

Similarly interconnected and inspiring instruction happens in all of Oxbow’s academic courses. Each semester students tell us that our academics are life-changing for them because the content and delivery are not just about preparing for a test or doing ‘busy work’. One of the most important skills we want to impart is the ability to take information from one domain and apply it in another setting; students leave Oxbow ready to reconfigure their knowledge to meet the challenges of ever-changing goals and environments.

“What is incredibly powerful about Oxbow is its heuristic approach; its process is based on enabling students to discover or learn things for themselves. Oxbow takes an integrated approach to getting a solid liberal arts education, but it’s art-centric—everything has an art focus. This differs from the ‘siloeed’ nature of education in this country, where courses are taught with no relationship to each other.”

—David Fineman, *parent*





Visiting artist Didier William



Sculpture by visiting artist John Buck

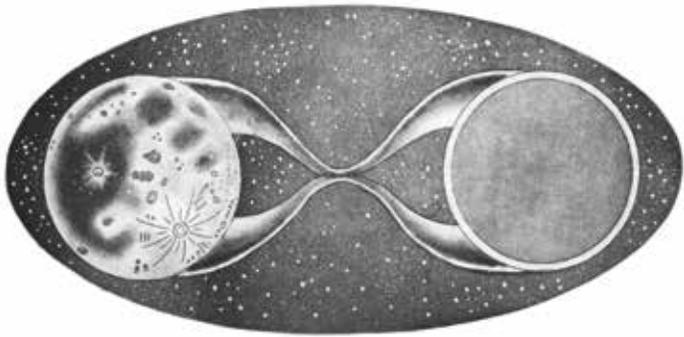
Visiting artists-in-residence.

Twice each semester, nationally acclaimed artists join the faculty in residence at Oxbow, giving students an opportunity to observe working professionals navigating the many phases of making an original piece. In recent years, some of the artists-in-residence have included Barnaby Furnas, The Art Guys, Paul Kos, Robert Kushner, Nina Katchadourian, Didier William, Deborah Butterfield, John Buck, Christopher Brown, Hung Liu, David Best, Reed Anderson and Randy Twaddle.

Each visiting artist designs a collaborative project with the students, providing tips, insights and critiques that give students a different perspective on their own approach to

creating art. Together, students, faculty, and visiting artists explore the nature of creative thinking and the role of the artist in contemporary society and culture.

In addition to the Artist-in-Residence program, Oxbow hosts a lively Artist Lecture Series. On five evenings each semester, the Oxbow community gathers to hear working artists talk about their creative process and listen to their views on what art is, what art means, and how artists think. These lectures are free and open to the public and have included such artists as Roy De Forest, Wayne Thiebaud, Squeak Carnwath, William Wiley, Inez Storer, and Deborah Oropallo.



Copperplate etching, Fortune Cookie project by Rachel Magdal

“I learned to drop all previous assumptions I had about people because I had never met anyone like the other students at Oxbow. For the first time, my peers and their insightful thinking inspired me. For example, during the ‘Einstein’s Dreams’ presentations, I kept looking around the room thinking, I can’t believe all of these students are talking the way I think.” —Sarah DeLong Concord, MA, student



Wood, mixed media sculpture, Final Project by Graham Gerrity



Sculpture, copperplate etching, Final Project by Tatian Borie



Painting, Fortune Cookie by Jeff Shen



Mixed media sculpture, final project by Dirk Van Slooten



Mixed media, Final Project by Kisa Morgan



Alternative process photography on canvas, Visiting Artist Project by Olivia Meehan



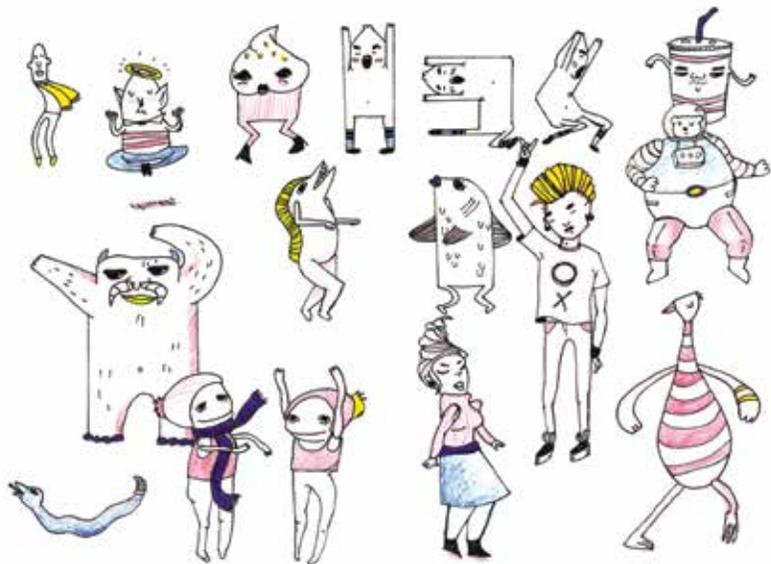
Painting by Maida Monaghan



Video installation, Final Project by Oliva Woodward



Mixed media sculpture, Final Project by Mikhailla Quezada-Freda



Animation still, Final Project by Sam Maurer

“We were in serious studios with serious teachers, serious supplies and were being demanded to take ourselves absolutely seriously. From the get-go we got intense assignments, which weren’t accepted late. For the four months I was there, I worked harder than I had ever worked in my life. There were beautiful people squirming, wheezing, flexing, flying and swimming all around me with ideas pumping through their brains.”

—Abby Noyes, San Francisco, CA, student



Mixed media video by Ella Snyder



Sculpture, Final Project by Rain Du



Sculpture, Final Project by Elise Wunderlich

Transformation

“Oxbow School is one of the preeminent choices for creative high school students interested in the arts. Their project-based, integrated approach to learning mirrors the approach of many top art schools. At California College of the Arts, we are thrilled to see applicants who have attended Oxbow because we know they are well prepared for the rigors of college level work. I wish there had been an Oxbow School when I was a high school student!”

—Stephen Beal, *President, California College of the Arts*

“The Oxbow School has both a local and national reputation for excellence. Oxbow produces great artists. In its studio, these emerging artists have a community of creative peers who respect one another and foster an expectation to produce thoughtful, sophisticated work.”

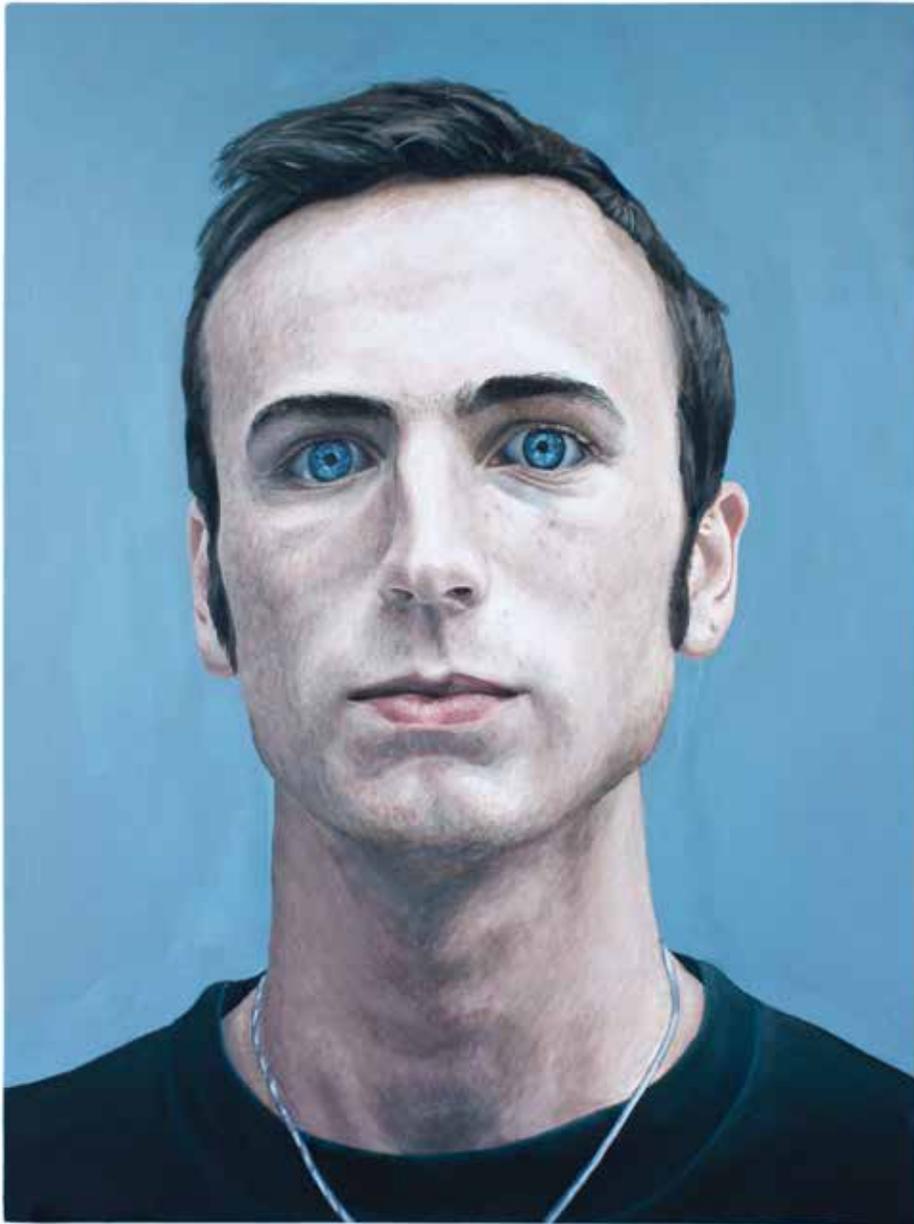
—Paul Coffey, *Dean of Undergraduate Admissions,
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago*



Copperplate etching, *Final Project by Clare Southworth*



Graphite drawing, *Final Project by Audrey Graff*



Portrait of fellow student by Sebastian Guerra

“The art that goes on in most high schools is usually relatively skill-based. At Oxbow, there is more emphasis on looking and seeing and more critical thinking about what you are doing, the human connection, that personal element. Through art you can begin to understand yourself better. That may be the biggest eye-opener for students. It is almost a preview of college. Get out of the mechanical factory high school education and get into something open, new, and invigorating in a small environment.”

—Bill Barrett, *former Board Member and Executive Director of Association of Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD)*



Sculpture, Final Project by Emily Birgé

“At its heart, science is about discovering the hows and whys of the universe, and art is about representing them for the self and others. Both the performance of science and the creation of art are hands-on, intensely creative activities, and it was a pleasure to show students how the two disciplines were alike in so many ways.”

—Jessica Hanson, *former Oxbow Science faculty*

“The Oxbow School

was a critical junction in my life where my artistic interests intersected with my sense of self, and never have the two parted since.

In my current career, I consider the time I spent at Oxbow to be the origin of much of what I consider to be my technique, character and courage.”

—Alexis Nordling, San Francisco, CA, *student*



APPLY

Thanks to generous donations from alumni, parents, and friends, Oxbow is able to award over half of our students scholarships every semester.

For more information on need and merit-based scholarships please contact our Admissions Office.

Apply online at Oxbowschool.org



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