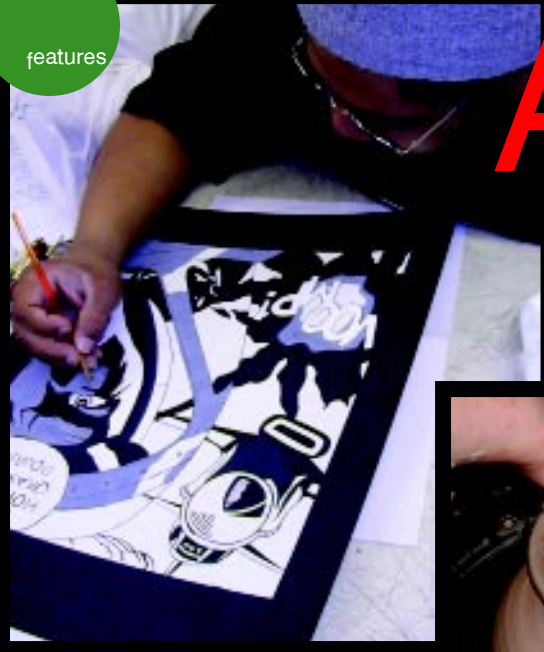


# Art & Design

@ ADRIAN

*“Art is long, and Time is fleeting...”*  
*-Longfellow*

by brad whitehouse



Brian Steele



**T**hey say that art is sometimes touched by madness. While it might be taking it a little far to say that's the secret behind the Adrian College Art & Design department, there is a feeling that the place exists on the edge of chaos. A normal person might go nuts here.

However, this is completely intentional. The art faculty at Adrian have a very specific goal in mind: to give their students every opportunity imaginable, even if it's almost all at once. The result is a place that's vital, moving, alive with the activity of art.

This is one reason why the department is gaining momentum. The reputation is getting out that Adrian is a place where talented, dedicated professors are creating an excellent program for talented, dedicated students.

“We're not looking to be the biggest

department,” Professor Pi Benio said. “We're looking to be the best.”

## Growth

Why are students attracted to AC? One reason is because Pi Benio is an incredibly effective recruiter. Pi, who came to Adrian in 1978, has great faith in art at Adrian, and an amazing gift for relating that to students who will prosper here. Before prospective art students ever step on campus, there's a good chance they already feel connected to Pi. That's because she's been calling them systematically for weeks.

“She'd ask my mom when I got home, and then she'd call then,” freshman Kendra Abbott recalls. “She'd ask about the things I was working on in high school, and she'd find out my interests and suggest things here that fit those.”

Bethany Douglas, a junior transfer student from Hillsdale College, says Pi helped her figure out everything so she



Brian Steele



Crystal Tursich '05



could graduate in two years.

“You know what I noticed? The professors here learn your name really fast, even if they don’t have you in class,” she said.

## Life

As one art faculty has said, “Art doesn’t stop when your class period is over.” Maybe that’s why there’s always something happening on the second floor of Mahan Hall. Late at night, it’s often the only place in the center of campus that still has the lights on. Go there during the day, and it’s even busier. There’s clay and dust and paint and *art* all over everything, and there are students buzzing around with this tremendous energy, which apparently they’re drawing from their professors, who are buzzing around even faster.

There’s a lot more than just classes going on. There are field trips, internships, community arts opportunities, student critiques and student exhibits.

There’s also a full gallery season. The faculty often make up for lack of money by transporting the artists’ work to campus themselves. (Just ask Professor Catherine Royer about adventures in rental trucks en route to Columbus or Chicago.) The benefit for the students is tremendous. They get to meet the artists and have their work critiqued by them. When Chicago artist Gladys Nilsson came to campus last year, students even wrote the wall copy that described her exhibition.

Jeff Ball, who was hired in 2000 to teach art history for the swelling department, has been impressed with the level of action at AC.

“It’s much, much more active here than what I’m used to. It’s frantic at times. It drives me crazy, to be honest, but I see why it’s appealing to students who really want to study art.”

“I’m also impressed by the overall quality of work,” he continued. “I sit and look at our dark room, for instance, how messed up it is in some ways, and the amazing images that keep coming out of it every year.”

## Nature

Adrian College is not strictly an art school. This makes it an excellent choice for a particular kind of student. Thanks to the liberal arts structure, students here learn to communicate and reason better, and to see the big picture. It also makes them more employable.

“There aren’t any entry-level jobs that say ‘artist,’” Royer said. “There are students who work into that, but we

keep them from starving in the meantime. They are more well-rounded.”

Another reason students are coming here is because of some of the unique offerings. AC has an interior design program, which is run by faculty who have their own interior design businesses. Not only does AC have a strong teacher education department, but art education majors have unique hands-on opportunities through the Youth Art Program, a community outreach initiative. And AC also has a pre-art therapy program, which works in conjunction with the Adrian Training School.

**Tabitha Beers ’01** came to AC for pre-art therapy. She took an internship in art therapy at Foote Hospital in Jackson. She remembers how Pi had to fight to win her the opportunity.

“One of the first things that [the internship supervisor] told me was that Pi was pretty persistent,” Tabitha said. “She was reluctant to take on an undergraduate intern.”

Tabitha now has her master’s degree, and is employed as an art therapist at the same hospital, under the same supervisor. She appreciates the attention she got at AC.

“When I went on to grad school, I was a bit spoiled by my time at Adrian,” she said. “I don’t think it’s possible to have a more dedicated group of professors.”

Those professors keep an eye on their students. It’s not uncommon for faculty to sit around and identify who might need an extra push, or might blossom from a certain opportunity. It’s all part of a goal to help students reach their potential.

“We’ve got to get them to buy into the fact that they are artists, teachers, that they’re on the way to becoming art therapists,” Catherine Royer said. “We’ve got to get them beyond thinking that they’re just taking classes and getting a college degree.”

Based on the extensive network of alumni that the faculty keeps in touch with, it must be working. Adrian art alumni are involved with art in all types of professions: as nature illustrators, as museum curators, as teachers, as full-time artists, as designers of furniture, clothing, advertising, department stores. Who they are is at least partly due to their professors, who, way back in their college days, believed in them, and believed in the role of art in their lives.

“I think art is the best thing in the world,” Pi said. “I’ve seen it change lives. It’s a real window in, to learn about yourself.”

## ART FACTS

### Faculty:

Brian Steele: photography, digital art

Cathie Royer: painting, drawing

Jeff Ball: art history

Pi Benio: sculpture, 3-D design

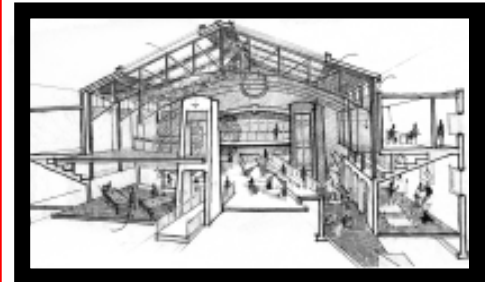
Nancy VanOver: interior design

### Adjuncts:

Juliana Clendenin, Kira Campbell, Deborah Campbell, Niki Havekost, Jamie Hogan, John MacNaughton, Liz Hartz, Debra Irvine, Rob Stranges, Cyndi Koppelman, Kristin Nelson, Pat Alber, Louise Kleinsmith, Robert Throne, AllyCatherine [sic], Susie Powell (technical assistant)

**PROGRAMS:** Studio art, art education, art history, arts management, pre-art therapy, interior design

**DEGREES:** Bachelor of arts, bachelor of fine arts, and bachelor of fine arts with teacher certification



### ART STUDIOS

The art & design department is located on the second floor of Mahan Hall. However, the new Ridge Student Center will include two new art studios and an art gallery court. Art alumni and friends of the arts are invited to contribute to an art studio naming opportunity, with a goal of \$50,000. Donors will be recognized in or near one of the studios.