

Careers in the Arts

Student and Teacher Resource

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INDEX

INTRODUCTION	3
CAREERS IN MUSEUMS	4
MUSEUM EDUCATION - Interview: Melissa Nelson	4
CONSERVATION - Interview: John Campbell	5
CAREERS IN ART EDUCATION	6
TEACHING, K-12 - Interview: Samuel Thomas	6
CAREERS IN THE MEDICAL FIELD	7
MEDICAL ILLUSTRATION - Interview: Mary Jordan	7
ART THERAPY - Interview: Katherine Houpt	8
CAREERS IN STUDIO ART	10
STUDIO ART - Interview: Michael O'Keefe	10
STUDIO ART/ARTS ADMINISTRATION – Interview: Vicki Meek	11
CAREERS IN COMMERCIAL ART	13
ARCHITECTURE - Interview: Peter Goldstein	13
THEATER: SET DESIGN - Interview: Beowulf Borritt	15
GRAPHIC DESIGN - Interview: Lindsey Croley	16
FILM INDUSTRY - Interview: Tim McLaughlin	17
ART IN THE BUSINESS WORLD	19
Interview: Katherine Wagner	19
Interview: Heather Kitchen	19
NEXT STEPS	20
CREATING A PORTFOLIO	21
MAJORING IN ART - Interview: Michael Corris	22
OTHER RESOURCES	24

Introduction

This guide was created in response to Dallas/Fort Worth teachers asking for more information about professional arts careers for their students. Many students entering college decide not to pursue an arts education because they fear the lack of opportunities or low wages often associated with arts careers. But there are a number of career fields that favor a background or education in the arts. Many of these are in rewarding and sought-after fields. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the NEA, over the next seven years, arts-related occupations will grow at a rate of eleven percent while the overall labor force will grow by ten.

Additionally, the skills one learns from the arts are often useful even for people who do not pursue traditional arts-related careers. According to Mark Bauerlein of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "when CEOs are queried about what kind of workplace talents they'd like to see more of, they don't talk about technical or computer or professional skills and knowledge. They talk about creativity, innovativeness, and imagination. Those traits come from long experience with literature, philosophy, and the arts."

This guide, for high school students and teachers, is designed to introduce students to a variety of possible careers in the arts. In it, you will find information about a number of different arts career paths, interviews with people who work in various arts careers, practical advice about pursuing a career in the arts, and information about the kinds of valuable skills that are promoted by an arts-based education.

This list of careers is by no means exhaustive, so if you plan to pursue an arts career, make sure you continue exploring all of your many options!

DISCUSS WITH STUDENTS

- What are some reasons people have for choosing the career they've chosen?
- Interview someone who has an interesting career.
 - What are some advantages and disadvantages of their career?
 - Why is their job important?

Careers in Museums

Museums offer a wide variety of career choices for people with arts backgrounds. Though art museums may immediately appeal to someone with an interest in the arts, museums of natural history, science and culture (among others) also require the skills of people with arts backgrounds.

Getting Started in the Museum Field

To prepare yourself for a museum career, search for internships at local museums. Internships are an important first step towards museum work. Internships can give you a better sense of the responsibilities and challenges you will face if you choose to work in a museum. They also look great on a resume!

These are a few of the positions in museums which require a background in the arts:

MUSEUM EDUCATION

Museum educators are responsible for educational programs and tours for the public. Some museum educators write grant proposals for special programs. Most professional museum educators have completed college or graduate work in art, art history, or related fields.



Interview: Melissa Nelson

Melissa Nelson is the Manager of Teaching in the Community at the Dallas Museum of Art.

What influenced you to be a museum educator?

I majored in Art History in college, but I had no idea what I wanted to do or could do with that degree. I saw a flyer for an internship at the Dallas Museum of Art my senior year, and luckily was selected for a summer internship in their Education department. I immediately fell in love

with teaching young children about art and sharing my excitement and passion for art with them. At that point, I knew I wanted to pursue a career in Museum Education.

What kind of professional training did you go through to become a museum educator?

I earned an undergraduate Art History degree in college. I also volunteered as a docent for the McNay Art Museum Education department while I was in college. I learned a great deal about museum education during my summer internship in the community outreach programs for the DMA. I continue to pursue professional development through local and national education conferences, as well as reading articles related to current best practices in Museum Education.

What is your favorite part of the job?

I love when the students I teach are having as much fun as I am, whether it is looking at and talking about works of art or making art activities.

What is the most challenging part of the job?

Juggling multiple responsibilities, such as managing, training, and communicating with volunteers; writing and developing new programs; and attending meetings and doing other administrative tasks.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming a museum educator?

Take a wide variety of art history classes as well as museum studies and museum education classes, if they are available to you. Volunteer and intern in museum education departments, and pursue other teaching opportunities like children's summer camps, art classes, etc. The more related experience you have, the more likely you will be selected for a paid internship or position in a museum.

CONSERVATION

A **conservator** maintains and preserves objects and maintains records on work done. Conservators have completed graduate work in chemistry and art history.



Interview: John Campbell

John Campbell is the former Conservator of the Nasher Sculpture Center. He currently works at CCS Conservation in Long Island City, New York.

Watch John's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources

Careers in Art Education

Art or art history teachers can be among the most influential figures in the lives of their students. The best art classes can be places of play and inquiry where achievement is measured less by the letter grade a student receives than by the meaning and importance of the art they create or the ideas they explore.

Getting Started in Art Education

If you would like to pursue a career in art education, make sure that you choose a bachelor's program which offers education classes with an arts focus. You might also interview a teacher or professor and see what steps he or she took to work in education. To gain more teaching experience, think about starting or joining an art club at your school. Planning and leading an art club discussion can be a great way to test new ideas.

TEACHING, K-12

A bachelor's degree and state certification is needed become a teacher at a public elementary, middle, or high school. Private schools may have different criteria.



Interview: Samuel Thomas

Samuel Thomas teaches art classes at McKinney Boyd High School in McKinney, TX.

Watch Samuel's interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculturecenter.org/learn/resources

Careers in the Medical Field

For many students, the most unexpected use of an arts education is in the medical field. Traditional medicine, often characterized by its scientific, methodical focus on ailments of the human body, might seem like a place where art skills, which frequently emphasize emotion and ambiguity, could seem out of place. However, according to Daniel Pink's *A Whole New Mind*, in many of the top medical schools in the world, doctors receive art training in the hope that it will encourage empathy and develop the sensitivity to nuance and subtlety required to make difficult diagnostic choices.

Getting Started in the Medical Field

Because most medical arts careers require a background in science and art, make sure that you take the most challenging science and art courses offered by your high school. Develop a background in anatomy, physiology, psychology, and the behavioral sciences while you study sculpture, computer design, and pencil drawing. When applying for college, make sure that your school offers a program focused on the medical arts career you are interested in.

Here are a few hybrid careers, focused on both science and art, which have emerged in the field of medicine:

MEDICAL ILLUSTRATION

A **medical illustrator** uses a variety of media (paint, pencil, ink, charcoal, sculpting clay, wax, plaster, wood, plastic, metal, and computer imaging among others) to render drawings and models that detail anatomical structures. These illustrations are either published in textbooks and medical journals or placed online for reference by professionals. Models created by medical illustrators may be used for practicing medical techniques.



Interview: Mary Jordan

Mary Jordan is a professional medical illustrator who manages and owns a medical illustration studio.

Watch Mary's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources

ART THERAPY

Art therapy combines training in art, art history, and psychology. An **art therapist** encourages patients to use art as a means of communication and expression.



Interview: Katharine Houpt

Katherine Houpt is an art therapist who works in Chicago.

Describe a typical work day for you.

I work at a retirement community with older adults. For me, a typical work day would start with facilitating an art therapy group, ranging from 3 - 15 residents of the community. I like to have a wide variety of art materials available to meet the diverse needs of the residents. I might start the session with a suggestion, such as "make a piece of art or creative writing about something that makes you feel proud." Other times, we may begin making art without a topic. My role is to support the residents as they make art that is meaningful to them. The purpose of each person's artmaking could be self-expression, processing losses, strengthening relationships, reviewing one's life, or increasing self-esteem. Sometimes the purpose is "art-as-therapy," which can mean using art to relax, feel comfort, or practice creativity. In the afternoon I might lead another group or have art therapy sessions with individuals, or practice for a community-building event (a more open art experience that involves strengthening relationships between everyone in the facility, from residents to family members to staff). Recently, our expressive arts department, which includes another art therapist, a dance/movement therapist, and a music therapist, collaborated with the residents of the retirement community to plan and perform a fashion show attended by other residents, family members, and staff.

Why did you decide to become an art therapist?

I am lucky enough to come from a family of artists and writers, so I have practiced art in many different forms all my life. After I graduated from college with an art degree, I practiced art at home while searching for a career that would allow me to feel satisfied every day. I tried graphic design, marketing, film festival programming, and food service. All of these things contributed to my realizing that more than anything, I was interested in people. I began reading books about psychology. A friend told me about the field of art therapy, and I knew it was the perfect way to combine my love of people with my love of art.

What professional training did you have to go through to become an art therapist?

I received a Master of Arts in Art Therapy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC). It is a two-year, 60-credit program, providing the necessary curriculum for eventual registration and board certification (ATR-BC) with the Art Therapy Credentials Board. The program meets the requirements of a counseling degree as well as providing a well-rounded education in art therapy. I chose the art therapy program at SAIC because of its focus on maintaining one's own

artistic practice as a vital part of being an art therapist. I also appreciate the SAIC faculty's encouragement to think critically about race, gender, class, sexuality, and other aspects of identity. A list of all the educational programs approved by the American Art Therapy Association can be found here:

<http://www.americanarttherapyassociation.org/aata-educational-programs.html>

What is your favorite part of the job?

My favorite part is forming deep and important relationships with the people I work with. People consistently amaze me with their creativity and willingness to explore their own identities, communities, and positions in the world. Most days I go home from work smiling, and that feels wonderful.

What is the most challenging part of the job?

In my work with older adults, I deal with loss on a daily basis. Older adults in long-term care can lose a significant amount of their former independence as well as losing important people in their lives. In working with them, I face loss when people pass away. It is important to me to acknowledge sadness when it arises, and to practice taking care of myself while encouraging others to do the same.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming an art therapist?

I suggest strengthening your own art practice! Don't limit yourself. I love making comics, collages, creative writing, films, ceramics, knitting, and performing improv. Make art with your friends. The more you expand your idea of what art can be, the more you will have to offer when you are an art therapist.

Katharine Houpt can also be seen in an interview featured on the website of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago:

http://www.saic.edu/gallery/saic_featured11.php?album=2108&vFile=Katharine_Houpt

Careers in Studio Art

Studio artists create and sell artwork through studios and galleries. People who pursue studio art often choose to supplement their income by pursuing work, like teaching, which allows them the time and freedom to create their own artwork. Though no training is necessary to be a studio artist, the field is very competitive, and many choose to pursue either bachelor of fine arts degrees or master of fine arts degrees.

Getting Started in Studio Art

Because the art market is so competitive, pursuing a career as a studio artist can be very difficult. If you are interested in becoming a studio artist, make sure that you practice and develop your arts skills. Begin to build a portfolio of artwork. (For studio artists, a portfolio is like a resume in other careers.) Fill your portfolio with high quality images of your best work. You should also think about what careers you can pursue to supplement your income. Many art teachers or professors continue to create and exhibit art while they are teaching.

STUDIO ART



Interview: Michael O'Keefe

Michael O'Keefe is a Dallas-based artist who works in both 2-D and 3-D media.

Watch Michael's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources

Read more about Michael O'Keefe, and see more of his artwork at his website:

<http://www.mokeefesculpture.com/>

STUDIO ART / ARTS ADMINISTRATION



Interview: Vicki Meek

Vicki Meek is a Dallas-based artist who also works as an administrator at the South Dallas Cultural Center, an important community enrichment organization.

Could you introduce yourself?

My name is Vicki Meek and I am an artist, arts administrator, arts educator, and a cultural critic. All of these jobs are incorporated in my current job which is Manager of the South Dallas Cultural Center but throughout my career, I have done one or more of these jobs in all the positions I held. I started working professionally in the arts as a sculpture instructor at Kentucky State University where I also taught art history courses. While there I was asked to run the university gallery which is how I was introduced to arts administration. From there I went to work at the Connecticut Commission on the Arts where I deepened my arts administration skills as the Artists in Schools Coordinator and later as a Senior Program Administrator. My move to Texas allowed me to work as an artist when I joined the City of Dallas City Arts Program's CETA Artist Residency Program. This program allowed me to utilize my design skills but also gave me an opportunity to work in the West Dallas community with children and youth. In 1983 I joined the administrative staff of the City Arts Program as the first Supervisor of Community Arts Development. I designed funding programs for small and mid-sized cultural organizations, artists and arts presenters. In my 32 years in Dallas I also ran a small alternative visual arts space, served as Artistic Director for the Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration and co-directed a major public arts project before becoming manager of the South Dallas Cultural Center.

Could you describe a typical work day?

There is no such thing as a typical day for most arts administrators and this certainly applies to my work day! One day may require I work on a grant proposal to get funds for a special youth program. Later that day, I may have to meet with some community people to discuss how to use the cultural center resources to decrease teen violence. The day may progress with me hosting an event and end with me installing an art exhibit. This is one of the reasons I have been able to stay energized throughout my 15 years working as manager at the Cultural Center. There's rarely a dull moment, or a predictable day!

Who or what influenced you to be an artist?

I always wanted to be an artist from the time I was a little girl until today. My parents collected art and my older brother was an artist and a musician so art was always a part of my life. My father was responsible for organizing art exhibitions at a place called The Wharton Center in Philadelphia, my hometown. So I was privileged to meet many professional African American artists as a child. My parents introduced me through art books to Elizabeth Catlett, a very

important African American sculptor so that I would have a role model as I developed as an artist.

What kind of professional training did you go through to become an artist?

I studied art from the time I was 8 years old. My first training was at Fleischer Memorial Art School in Philadelphia. I went to college to study sculpture and ultimately earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts at Tyler School of Fine Arts, the art school for Temple University. I went on to earn my Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison Wisconsin. I did additional post-graduate work in Art History at Queens College, in New York. All of my arts administration skills were acquired on the job since at the time that I took my first job in this field, there were no college programs in this field. Now you can earn a degree in Arts Administration at a variety of fine universities.

What is your favorite part of being an artist?

The best thing about being an artist is having the ability to express very emotional feelings, or special concerns about humanity using a medium that crosses all cultural, racial, gender, or ethnic barriers.

What is the most challenging part of being an artist?

The most challenging part of being an artist is getting the work seen by as many people as possible. This requires making contact with a lot of different arts venues and constantly keeping my work in the public arena. With my daily responsibilities at the Cultural Center, it can be challenging to keep myself working on art as well.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming artists?

The best advice I can give any student who wants to become an artist is to be passionate about your pursuit of art. That means see as much art as you possibly can, constantly work on improving your skills (you never stop learning as an artist!) and try to keep your mind open to all kinds of art, regardless of whether you plan to make art like it. Everything can inform your work and sometimes the strangest things will, if you allow yourself to be open to experiencing all that life can bring!



Careers in Commercial Art

There are many, many commercial careers which require a background in art and design. Graphic art, clothing design, industrial design—nearly everything you touch or see has been created by someone. However, more and more often, commercial organizations that formerly had little reason to pursue artists are seeking designers for websites, products and marketing. Because of the importance of the internet, even small businesses with local clients are employing graphic designers and artists to develop their public image.

As you read the following interviews, please keep in mind that these are only a few of the commercial careers available to those who study art. There are many others, so make sure that you continue your research!

Getting Started in Commercial Art

Because of the vast range of commercial art fields, people find their ways into these careers following a number of different paths. If you are interested in pursuing a field of commercial art, the most important advice is to study art as broadly as possible, and talk to someone who has had success in their career path.

ARCHITECTURE

Architects are responsible for planning and designing buildings.



Interview: Peter Goldstein

Peter Goldstein is a licensed architect and a teacher in the Dallas Independent School District's magnet architecture program.

Why did you decide to become an architect?

I have always enjoyed art, and as a child, I loved to draw and build things. When I was in elementary school, my family moved into a new house, and there were several other houses in the neighborhood that were under construction that I would visit and explore. I liked to imagine what the house would be like when it was finished. I also remember visiting the Kimbell Art Museum, and the Hall of State at Fair Park, and being amazed by the beauty of these places. Then, when I was in high school, my parents took me to Washington DC to see the newly opened East Wing of the National Gallery of Art, and I was hooked.

What kind of training is required to become an architect?

To be an architect requires a license just like being a doctor or a lawyer. In order to get your architectural license, you need to have a professional college degree which takes 5 or 6 years. Texas is an excellent state for aspiring architects, not just because we are surrounded by great architecture, but because we have a number of outstanding schools of architecture in the area. After you receive your B. Arch or M. Arch degree, you do an internship where you work in an architect's office. Then, after 3 years as a paid intern, you can take the Architectural Registration Exam. I took my registration exam in Massachusetts and will never forget it—it was on the MIT campus near a building by Alvar Aalto and next to one of my favorite buildings, a small chapel designed by architect Eero Saarinen.

Could you describe a typical work day?

My day as a teacher is really different than my days as an architect, but they both require many of the same skills- collaboration, communication, and creative problem solving. The day to day practice of architecture depends on lots of things including the size of the firm- working in a big corporate office is really different than working in a small 1 or 2 person firm. I did my internship at SOM (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill), a very large firm in Houston, where I worked on a number of high rise buildings, including two buildings in downtown Dallas. Then, I moved to the Boston area and worked in a small firm where we designed houses. They were two totally different experiences.

There is a misconception that all architects do is draw, when in reality the architect's day involves a range of activities from meeting with clients, contractors and engineers, to writing field notes after a site visit. This is one of the things I like about architecture- it involves a lot of different skill sets and activities. It also requires focus over long stretches of time which is not for everyone, some people like to finish a job quickly and move on. The practice of architecture is not like that- it requires a lot of patience.

What is your favorite part of the job?

I really enjoy visiting a job during construction. It is very exciting to see something you designed and worked on for so long, being built. Sometimes, things are just the way you imagined them, and other times they are completely different. And, it is fascinating to see all of the different components that go into the making of a building. In a finished building many of the parts are hidden, but during construction they are there to see. On the job site, you also realize that architecture is a collaborative activity, and that it takes a large team of people working together to make a building. Unlike a painter or writer, an architect does not work alone.

What is the most challenging part of the job?

Downturns in the economy like the one in 2008 are a major challenge. When the economy slows down, so does construction, and this has a ripple effect throughout the entire building industry. Hopefully, we will not see another economic downturn of the magnitude of the one we just went through. I have been through two of these cycles during my career, and they can be a real challenge.

What advice do you have for students interested in becoming an architect?

Follow your passion, whatever it may be. If you really enjoy architecture, make it a point to explore buildings new and old, and draw and sketch as much as you can. Dallas is a great place for architects and for architecture, and I feel really fortunate to live and work here. Our city is rapidly growing and there are lots of interesting buildings in the Metroplex. The Nasher Sculpture Center is one of many new buildings in Dallas that have changed our landscape- it houses a world-class art collection in one of the most innovative museum buildings in the country. You don't have to go far to find great architecture. It's right here all around us.

THEATER: SET DESIGN

Theater set designers build sets for plays and performances. This job requires a great deal of collaboration with other members of a production including the director, performers, and, at times, the author of the play.



Interview: Beowulf Borritt

Beowulf Borritt is a Tony-award nominated set designer. His sets have been featured in shows throughout the country.

What is a day in the life of a set designer like?

I don't have an average day. I work out of a studio in my home, unless I am at a theatre doing technical rehearsals for a show. So, every day is a little different. Some days I'm home drawing, or

building a model of a set. Some days I'm in rehearsals for a show in NY, and some days I'm travelling to another city or country to do a set for a show there.

What prepared you for a career in set design?

I always liked drawing and theatre, and that's what got me started as a set designer. I interned at a summer theatre when I was in high school and I loved it, so I majored in theatre in college, and then went to graduate school in New York to study set design specifically.

What advice do you have for students?

Theatre is a fun career, it's always different, and it allows a lot of creativity. However, it's very competitive, and luck is more important than talent, unfortunately, in determining success. It's also a lot of work. I work an average of 60 to 80 hours a week, so it's more hours than a lot of professions.

Can you describe a time when you had to collaborate with someone else to execute the vision of the production?

For the [Tony-winning Broadway show] *Scottsboro Boys*, the director wanted to make the set just be a circle of chairs which could be stacked up to create a sort of jungle gym which could be lots of different things- a train, a jail cell, a bus, and many other things. It was very challenging, and very exciting to work out the design.

What special considerations do you have to keep in mind knowing that the actors will be interacting with the world you create?

Ideally the set serves to allow the actors to tell the story of the play. It can't overpower them, and it can't make it impossible for them to move around. If it's a show with dancing, the floor must be large enough, and smooth enough to allow dancing. It can't be heavy or ungainly so that they can't function on it.

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Graphic Designers develop and create the images used by commercial and non-profit businesses. Their techniques and subjects vary depending on the needs of the company or institution they work for, but most are familiar with popular



Interview: Lindsey Croley

Lindsey Croley is the Graphic Designer at the Nasher Sculpture Center.

Watch Lindsey's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources

FILM INDUSTRY

Since the early days of cinema, artists have been employed in the film industry in fields as diverse as set-design, prop-making, costume design, and puppet-making. More recently, computer-generated imagery (CGI) has allowed artists to play an even more important role in the filmmaking process.



Interview: Tim McLaughlin

Tim McLaughlin is the Associate Professor and Head of Department of Visualization at Texas A&M University. He worked as a Creature Developer at Industrial Light and Magic and Lucasfilm Animation for thirteen years.

Could you discuss how you collaborated with others involved in moviemaking?

The most wonderful thing about the visual effects and animation industry is the process of dailies. At the start of each day teams will gather together to review and critique the work from the day before. This provides not only immediate feedback about how you're doing with your work and guidance about where to go in the next stages, but is a great way to build team cohesion. After dailies most artists work in open offices of 2-6 other artists so that, though the work is largely composed on a computer and managed through displays, the atmosphere is that of being involved in a collaborative process.

What many people outside the industry don't realize is how much time it takes to produce the imagery seen on the screen. It is reasonably quick to develop the first 90% of the elements to completion for a single character or shot. The real work is done when trying to get to 100% completion. The level of detail required, artistic issues to be concerned with, finesse, and revision needed is extraordinary for large productions such as visual effects heavy movies.

Why did you decide to become a digital creature developer?

I entered the industry to work on 'Jumanji' in 1994. This was just a few years after 'Jurassic Park' and at that time setting up digital characters was managed at the beginning of a project then everyone got on with the work of animation, lighting, and compositing. Successive projects such as 'Mars Attacks!', 'Star Wars: Episode I', and 'Van Helsing' became ever-bigger, and ever-more intense in terms of the expectations for digital characters. My career evolved along with those changes.

I've always enjoyed fantastical creatures whether I was drawing giants and trolls as a school boy, or creating digital dragons as a student so it felt quite natural to me to move fully into digital creature work.

What professional training did you have to go through to become a digital creature developer?

My undergraduate degree is in Environmental Design, which at Texas A&M is a preparatory degree for the professional study of architecture. The wonderful thing about an architectural education is that it is project based and concerned with marrying good design with efficient engineering. These are the same foundations of computer graphics. My graduate degree is a Master of Science in Visualization Sciences, also from Texas A&M. I went to graduate school in this area to become adept at creating virtual environments for architectural purposes but soon became seduced by the entertainment industry.

What was your favorite part of the job?

As a professor my favorite parts of my job are mentoring students and pursuing the answers to research questions that I was never able to fully investigate in the production world. As a creature developer I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of making movement of synthetic characters (locomotion, fur, clothing, skin) appear photo-realistic.

What was the most challenging part of the job?

The most challenging parts of visual effects are finding the motivation to continually iterate over solutions to a problem. Sometimes it can be so frustrating -particularly if art direction is not entirely clear -to come up with just the right changes in form, movement, or look to satisfy the completion of a shot or a character.

In academics it is challenging and frustrating to watch the support for public education dwindle while simultaneously people are anxious to discover solutions to highly complicated problems in engineering, medicine, social structures and so many other areas that impact our lives.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming a digital creature developer?

My advice to aspiring digital creature developers is to continually develop their powers of observation. It's fun to create imaginary worlds and characters, but how immersed are you in the way that real people and animals look and move? Focus on the nuances that distinguish one type of animal from another. How can those features be represented and exaggerated? Also, practice maintaining focus and being critical about your work.

Art in the Business World

Even if you decide not to pursue a traditional art career, studying the arts can teach you important skills that will be useful to you whatever you decide to do. Learning art techniques can make you more creative, more sensitive to subtlety, more observant of minor details, and more aware of the world around you. These are all important qualities that will serve you in business and in life no matter what you decide to do for a living.

HOW CAN THE ARTS CONTRIBUTE TO SUCCESS IN BUSINESS



Interview: Katherine Wagner

Katherine Wagner is the CEO of Business Council for the Arts, a not-for-profit organization. Throughout her career, she has developed and encouraged relationships between businesses and arts organizations.

Watch Katherine's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources



Interview: Heather Kitchen

Heather Kitchen is the Managing Director of the Dallas Theater Center. In her long career, she has been an important advocate for the arts as a manager or director of theater companies throughout the US and Canada.

Watch Heather's video interview on the Nasher website:

nashersculpturecenter.org/learn/resources

Next Steps

For most careers, both in the arts and otherwise, completing college is the first step. But successfully applying for college requires a great deal of planning and organization. The following timeline is designed to provide some basic structure to your preparation. In addition to following this timeline, you should also be sure to meet with your admissions counselor at least once per semester.

Freshman

- In addition to taking classes that fulfill the key requirements of your school, begin to take classes that are suited to your interests. If you think you know of a career you might like to pursue, test the waters by taking classes related to that field.
- Make a list of your extracurricular activities. Begin thinking about how your extracurricular activities can complement your course-load. For instance, if you are interested in drawing, but you are unable to take a drawing class, start or join an art club to find like-minded individuals.
- Start investigating colleges. Ask your guidance counselor for information about colleges that suit your skills or ambitions.
- If you have not already started saving for college, *start saving for college*. College is very expensive, and if you want to pursue an arts career, it is best to start with as little debt as possible.

Sophomore

- Take the PSAT. No matter what field you decide to study, getting a good score on the SAT will be essential. Taking the PSAT will give you a sense of how you will do, and how you can work to improve your score.
- Begin investigating or taking AP courses. Many colleges accept AP credit, and entering college with credit will allow you more freedom to take the courses you want to take.
- Try to find a summer job or opportunities to volunteer. Keeping a summer job will show colleges that you are a dedicated and hard worker. And volunteer experience in a field you are interested in pursuing is a great way to test the waters and see if you are suited to a specific career and gain some hands-on experience

Junior

- Take the PSAT again in the fall. Practice makes perfect!
- Many college counselors encourage students to take the SAT in the spring of their junior year. However, this recommendation may vary from school to school. See what your admissions counselor says and do some additional research on your own.
- Take a challenging course load. Take difficult AP courses to prepare yourself for the workload when you get to college.

- Make a list of colleges that you might like to attend. Ask your college counselor what you need to do to make yourself a better candidate for the list of colleges you have chosen.
- Search for scholarships. In addition to your own investigation, ask your college admissions counselor for more information about which scholarships you might qualify for.
- Begin writing your application essay. Find a teacher or trusted editor who can help you write your essay.

Senior

- Take the SAT in the fall. When you learn your SAT score, talk to your admissions counselor and do some research on your own to see if your score might make you eligible for grants or scholarships and begin applying for them early.
- Complete your application essay. Make sure that you have shown multiple drafts to people whose opinions you trust.
- Attend National Portfolio Day. National Portfolio Day is an event where admissions counselors from various art schools make themselves available for applicants. More information can be found at their website: <http://portfolioday.net/>
- Apply to schools. Make sure that you apply to many schools. This will give you options, and, if you are accepted into more than one school, many programs will match scholarship offers if they are especially interested in you as a candidate.

CREATING A PORTFOLIO

A portfolio of your artwork is essential for any young arts professional. Whether to show a possible employer or for your own benefit, a portfolio is an important record of your progress as an artist. Here are a few tips you should keep in mind when you build your portfolio:

- Include as much range and variety in your portfolio as possible. Include images of commercial work and fine art, painting and sculpture. Make sure that your portfolio expresses the range of your interests as much as possible.
- Make high quality digital photographs of your art, and make sure to back them up.
- Some employers or schools will need to see copies of your school transcript, your artist's statement, or other information. Make sure to ask what kind of documents you should include in your portfolio, and include them as necessary.
- Make sure not to throw away your work. Old artwork can be used as a record of your progress, or it can provide inspiration for new material.
- Do what it takes to keep your mind focused on creating art. Some people make daily sketches while others take classes or create projects for themselves.

MAJORING IN ART



Interview: Michael Corris

Since November 2009, Michael Corris has been Professor of Art and Chair of the Division of Art, Meadows School of the Arts, SMU, Dallas, TX.

How can a BFA in studio art benefit a student?

Our BFA offers concentrated, professional study in a wide range of media and approaches to art, some of which go beyond the typical studio art program. If you are serious about art, and want to take advantage of the breadth offered by a major university, then you will definitely benefit from our program. You will develop and grow as an artist, since the BFA program is intense and demands real maturity and concentration. The rewards are substantial; you will learn how to become an independent artist, and will get a great deal of support to find your own voice and practice your specific interests. More than that, you will be working with artists who are practicing professionals in their own right, exhibiting across the world. At every step of the way, we find that students who enjoy initiating work and who are curious, disciplined and filled with a passion for art. While we recommend students for the program who are serious about art pursue the BFA, we have other options, too, for those students who would like to study more than one subject. To accommodate these students, we offer a BA in art. You will select from the same courses as the BFA student, but are required to complete only about one-half the credits in advanced courses. Some may be interested in digital and new media or video games design. In this case, you should look into the BFA/MIT program, which leads to a Masters in Interactive Technology from The Guildhall, or consider double majoring in Creative Computing and BA Art.

What should high school students who are interested in pursuing the arts do to prepare themselves for college?

If your school offers Advanced Placement (AP) courses in Art and/or Art History, take these. If not, see if you can find courses outside school, on the weekends or in the evenings, where you can develop your skills and learn new ways of making art. The main thing is to do as much work as possible outside the assignments. To help prospective art students develop their skills, we offer a series of week-long intensive courses on campus during the summer: the Meadows Academy for Young Artists. Here, you will work in a university setting, taught by professional artists, in a variety of studio and extra-studio practices. These run the gamut from painting, drawing, sculpture, ceramics and printmaking to photography, video, creative computing and public art projects. If you can't make the summer program, we also run life drawing sessions all year long for high school students.

What do art schools look for in the portfolios of prospective students?

We look for a range of expertise and work that demonstrates serious self-motivation. We like to see work from observation in a variety of media (pencil, charcoal, colored pencils, watercolor, acrylic, oils . . . Whatever you feel shows you to the best advantage) that goes beyond the standard high school assignment. We also like to see work using photography and video, if this is something that interests you. Or, digital art, animation and three-dimensional work. We ask for 15-18 pieces of work, in digital photographic format, to be uploaded to our portfolio review website, SlideRoom. You will find more information about portfolio submissions at our website ([Division of Art, Meadows School of the Arts, SMU](#)).

What advice do you have for high school students who are interested in pursuing a career in the arts?

Make art every chance you have! Keep a sketchbook and don't be afraid to experiment with new techniques and materials. Most of all, keep informed about contemporary art: visit museums, galleries and special art events at local colleges and universities. Surf the web, visit the websites of the major museums in DFW, LA, Chicago, NY, London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, Beijing and elsewhere. Read art blogs, like [Glasstire](#) or [Artforum](#). Visit the library and read about art and artists. Immerse yourself in art and learn to teach yourself. But if you are lucky enough to have some friends that are also interested in art, get together regularly with them and share your work with each other.

Other Resources

This website tallies a range of different statistics on arts graduates across the country and presents them using interactive menus and graphs.

<http://snaap.iub.edu/snaapshot/index.cfm>

This website, from the University of Notre Dame, discusses various career fields available to students of art history and their minimum entry requirements.

<http://www.nd.edu/~crosenbe/jobs.html>

This website has information about a number of different arts-based careers including average salaries and entry requirements.

<http://www.myartscareer.org/#>

This website discusses National Portfolio Day which allows students to meet representatives from different art programs.

<http://portfolioday.net/>

American Institute for Conservation: <http://www.conservation-us.org/>

National Art Education Association: <http://www.arteducators.org/>

American Association of Art Museums: <http://aam-us.org/>

American Art Therapy Association guide to approved educational programs:

<http://www.americanarttherapyassociation.org/aata-educational-programs.html>

A few Texas schools that offer a BFA in art:

Rice University: <http://arts.rice.edu/>

Southern Methodist University: <http://www.smu.edu/Meadows/AreasOfStudy/Art>

Texas Christian University: <http://www.art.tcu.edu/>

Texas Tech University: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/art/>

University of Houston: <http://www.uh.edu/class/art/>

University of North Texas: <http://www.unt.edu/majors/uart.htm>

University of Texas at Arlington: <http://www.uta.edu/art/>

University of Texas at Austin: <http://www.utexas.edu/finearts/aah/academic/studio-art>

University of Texas at Dallas: <http://www.utdallas.edu/atec/>

University of Texas at Tyler: <http://www.uttyler.edu/art/>