

## **Academic Program Review**

Department of Art & Art History  
College of Fine Arts  
University of New Mexico

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### **Academic Program Review Team:**

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This report has been prepared upon thorough review of documentation submitted by the Department of Art and Art History at the University of New Mexico and a two-day visit, including an agenda of meetings with various department constituencies, tours of facilities, and discussions with individual administrators.

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Introduction**

The Department of Art and Art History is a unit of the College of Fine Arts. The department offers the B.F.A. and B.A.F.A. degree in Studio Art and a B.A.F.A. in Art History. Undergraduate programs include Art History, Art & Ecology, Ceramics, Electronic Arts, Painting & Drawing, Photography, Printmaking, Sculpture, and Studio Foundations. Graduate education includes the M.A. and Ph.D. program in Art History, and the M.F.A. is offered in Studio Art, which includes six focus areas: 3D (Sculpture and Ceramics), Painting & Drawing, Photography, Electronic Arts, Printmaking, and Art & Ecology. The department's academic philosophy is well presented in the Mission Statement that appears on its website:

“By providing an atmosphere where creativity and intellectual discourse can grow, the Department of Art and Art History demonstrates its strong commitment to its existence as a union of Studio Artists and Art Historians. The Department recognizes the benefits that are gained through the integration of the making of art with its interpretation and history. Creative and intellectual energy from this combination benefits undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. People within the Department itself, in the College of Fine Arts and throughout the University of New Mexico as a whole all benefit from this integration.

“The importance of the arts as communication, in the past, the present and the future, is pivotal. This understanding is the keystone of our programs, and it is the foundation for our primary goals. Among those goals is to expose students to the richness of art through the practices and techniques of making art. We seek to develop an awareness and practice of critical thought in our classes. Students develop the practices and methods for understanding the history of art. The Department firmly believes in the importance of interdisciplinary studies rather than the isolation of areas of learning and thus encourages the exploration of cross-disciplinary courses both within and outside the Department of Art and Art History and the College of Fine Arts.”

To help frame this report, the Academic Program Review team has identified the following categories:

- I. General observations
- II. Faculty
- III. Organization and Staffing
- IV. Instructional Programs
- V. Facilities
- VI. Students
- VII. Closing Thoughts

Clearly, some ideas and observations span two or more categories, but the reviewers have tried to develop a logical and cogent series of responses and recommendations that are intended to help the planning process of the Department of Art and Art History and clarify its future priorities.

## **I. General Observations**

Academic departments and programs that excel do so because of three critical strengths: distinguished and diverse faculty, strong administration, and effective strategic planning. Other factors, including high-quality creative research and teaching facilities, good staffing, effective student advising, and recruiting strengths that include merit-based scholarships, fellowships, and proximity to major art centers, are also important. All of these features of disciplinary excellence contribute to the most essential measures of academic status: the enthusiasm and engagement of students, and their subsequent professional success.

In assessing the programs and planning in the Department of Art and Art History, the reviewers acknowledge a variety of challenges the department faces in gaining and maintaining academic excellence. The University of New Mexico is located in one of the least populated regions in the United States. While it is the most distinguished institution of higher education in the state, it competes with a number of other regional or national academic institutions for the best high school scholars and artists, and must work against the outside (and unfair) impression that its surroundings are less cultured and (intellectually) resource rich than other parts of the country. Yet the Department of Art and Art History has overcome these challenges to develop a very good reputation overall among university programs in its paired disciplines, with particular programs of the department enjoying national ranking, including Photography in the studio, and Arts of the Americas and Arts of the Modern Age in art history.

There are also unique resources on or nearby the University that add to the Department's strength, including Tamarind Institute, an internationally recognized printmaking studio; the Latin American and Iberian Institute, a Title VI National Resource Center for Latin America; the excellent University Library system which includes the Center for Southwest Research and the Bunting Visual Resources Library; the Arts Research Technology Center (ARTS Lab) and its accompanying Interdisciplinary Film and Digital Media Program (IFDM). The department also maintains good working relationships with Hispanic and Native American scholarly programs on campus. The influential contemporary art exhibitions and curatorial programs of Site Santa Fe are a one hour drive from Albuquerque, and the dramatic landscape and rich cultural history of the region is a distinctive overarching resource.

### **The Review Process:**

The process set up for the Review Committee to evaluate the Art and Art History Department was excellent in most areas. Our meetings with university administrators and with graduate students in the department were quite fruitful. However, the evaluative processes for the art studio and art history programs were quite dissimilar. Whereas all evaluators visited all studio art areas and met with most professors in each of these areas, originally few meetings were scheduled for the art history area; evaluators were scheduled to meet with only one art history faculty--a junior faculty member (who was very helpful)-- and to attend one class in art history. In the evaluations that members of the team have prepared previously for other universities and colleges, we have found that every faculty member has something to contribute which generally helps shed light on the information garnered elsewhere during the site visit. Speaking with these faculty members often uncovers important information concerning both positive and negative issues within the department. So concerned were we about this lack of contact that we asked the department chair to convene other art historians with whom we could speak. He did so, and the art history reviewers met with four other faculty members. This allowed us to garner a more complex understanding of the art history program on a number of levels. As a result of this meeting, however, the two reviewers missed the visit to the Tamarind Institute. Nor did they have time to visit classrooms for possible spatial and equipment needs in art history, or evaluate the library for graduate study. They did hear of some of these needs from both art history graduate students and the faculty with whom we spoke. Ultimately the two art history reviewers felt that they did receive a workable overview of the art history program, but for future reviews they recommend that the two programs should be given equal access.

The original lack of explicit attention to art history in the evaluation schedule may actually be a reflection of one of the department's most valuable assets: the close interaction between the art

studio and art history components of the department. Throughout the department, professors and students, artists and art historians act upon their belief that the arts, its criticism and its history are deeply interconnected and should be taught accordingly. Faculty working together in studio critiques, for example, demonstrate the interplay between the two disciplines. Art historians are commonly asked to join studio critiques, and art history graduates write essays for museum exhibitions of art graduate students. Such interaction has a long history in the arts at UNM. Very few art and art history departments nationally can claim such a close relationship. The new positions in art criticism held by Hickie and Lumpkin further enhance the connection between the two areas (though it may be that these hires will be more useful to art studio than to art history). The close interaction between artists and art historians is quite unusual across U.S. universities and the evaluation team unanimously considered this laudable arrangement to be a key strength of the department.

## **II. Faculty**

In our meetings with undergraduate and graduate students in both the art studio and art history programs, we consistently found that the faculty was highly praised as a fundamental departmental strength. Several students noted that the quality of the faculty was a major reason that they applied to UNM in the first place, and chose it over other programs they might have attended. Students consistently spoke of the creativity of the faculty, their innovative approach to their own research and studio work, and their strong commitment to classroom teaching and graduate student supervision and mentoring. The reviewers were very impressed with the enthusiasm of the faculty members with whom they met during the visit. The substantial numbers of energetic younger faculty in the Department represent a core of excellence that will continue to make positive institutional and disciplinary contributions in years to come. The University is fortunate to have such hard-working and caring faculty. It is rare indeed to see such unanimous support for professors in both areas of a complex department such as the UNM Department of Art and Art History.

The evaluation team was unanimous, however, in its assessment that Art and Art History faculty need better support from the University. Considering their poor salaries, much lower than those for faculty at comparable institutions, and the wide range of concerns that faculty shared with us during the visit, it is a tribute to the department and its students that the faculty remain at UNM. Faculty members have received minimal or no salary raises in the last few years and are poised to experience similarly flat incomes or to face voluntary or mandated “furloughs” in the months ahead. Resources for conference travel and research support are extremely meager, and concerns were expressed that they would decline even further given the financial difficulties in which the university finds itself. UNM offers several university-wide research seed grants for which all faculty may apply, but the amounts are small and the number of applicants greatly exceeds the available funding, so only a small percentage of the university faculty receive these grants. Most colleges and universities nation-wide allocate at least a small yearly travel fund (\$1,000-2,000) to all faculty so that they can maintain contact with colleagues and trends in their fields by attending the yearly conferences in their disciplines. These conferences offer indispensable opportunities to present their research to their peers, obtain needed feedback, and hear about their colleagues’ latest research. Such a fund would create a great deal of support from faculty at a minimum of cost.

### III. Organization and Staffing

The Department of Art and Art History is housed along with three other departments--Music, Theater and Dance, and Cinematic Arts—in the College of Fine Arts. Currently, Professor of Dramatic Writing Jim Linnell serves as Acting Dean of Fine Arts. According to UNM Provost Suzanne Ortega, plans are underway for a national search for a permanent dean. We applaud the university's commitment to this investment of resources, which we view as tremendously important for the college and its departments, including Art and Art History.

In addition to Dean Linnell, the College is administered by two associate deans--Bill Gilbert, Senior Associate Dean, and Holly Barnet-Sanchez, Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Both associate deans are from the Department of Art and Art History: Associate Dean Gilbert is from the Art & Ecology area, and Associate Dean Barnet-Sanchez is on the Art History faculty. The contributions of these two faculty members to college administration are widely appreciated, though the trade-off, according to some graduate students, is that two of the department's best teachers are now forced to offer fewer courses in order to accommodate their administrative responsibilities. It struck us that the Department of Art and Art History should be praised for helping manage the college, which we assume is compensating the department financially for its administrative contributions. We urge that the college and department continue to collaborate on strategies such as creative course scheduling to minimize any negative impacts on the department's graduate program stemming from their faculty's participation in college administration.

At the time of our visit, the university was undergoing a funding reduction from the State of New Mexico, and departments and colleges throughout UNM were discussing ways to decrease their budgets to compensate for the cuts. Particularly upsetting to art and art history faculty was the specter of increased teaching loads beyond the two courses per semester which are normally assigned to faculty members in Fine Arts. We assumed that this was an unfounded rumor because we could not imagine that a research focused "flagship" university like UNM would risk losing its excellent faculty by increasing their teaching duties beyond those of peer institutions where a two-course load (or less) is standard for tenure-stream faculty. We heard similar disheartening rumors—such as that offered by the--graduate students that they were poised to lose half of their graduate assistantships—which turned out to be untrue, so we--hoped that this was simply another reflection of collective anxiety at a time of fiscal difficulty.

However, in case the administration is actually contemplating raising teaching loads as a cost-cutting strategy, we feel compelled to express our concern that such a decision would be extremely destructive to the department and its faculty. The "extra" courses available to students would be unlikely to compensate for the increased stress on faculty who are already stretched to the limit. Art history, with a substantial cohort of Ph.D. students requiring effective supervision and mentorship, would be especially disadvantaged because much of its faculty's contributions to graduate training come on top of their classroom duties—though a similar case could be--made for art studio faculty who spend considerable time training students outside the confines of the formal classroom. From what we gleaned from speaking with worried faculty, such a decision would catalyze a massive exodus of faculty from UNM to other research universities with standard teaching loads—and despite the depressed national job market, the internationally respected art and art history faculty would likely find new jobs in short order. The loss of quality faculty would initiate a corresponding drop in the quality of the graduate students, as both trends reinforced each other in a devastating downward spiral from which the department might never

recover. We strongly urge the university and the college to address their budget short-falls in ways other than increasing faculty course loads.

Another budget-related concern expressed during our visit was that the department might have to eliminate staff positions. We would view this as terribly unfortunate because all the staff members in art and art history play important roles and their contributions would be difficult to forgo or replace. Our team was extremely impressed by the competence of the administrative, advisement, and technical staff. Our first evidence of their quality came from the excellent departmental report, which lists staff members Nancy Treviso, Angelina Skonieczka, Marjorie Crow, and Kat Heatherington as among the “small group (who) contributed the most information and time toward the completion of this study.” Our experience during the site visit reinforced our positive impression. Our every wish, including our request to rearrange the schedule to accommodate our need for more information about certain aspects of the department, was fulfilled effectively and cheerfully by the departmental staff. Nancy Treviso and her staff struck us as extremely competent, knowledgeable, and well-informed about the department and the university. The technical staff was equally impressive.

#### **IV. Instructional Programs**

##### **Art History:**

The art history program lives up to its excellent reputation in various ways, including the range of the topical areas addressed in the curriculum, and the excellence of the faculty and the substantial quality of the graduate students the department is able to recruit. With very few exceptions, Art History faculty maintain productive research agendas and publish important works that attract and maintain excellent graduate students. Only the very best colleges and universities nationwide are able to recruit and retain such a distinguished faculty.

The UNM art history program fills a unique niche among U.S. universities not only because of its content-- which focuses on Pre-Columbian, Spanish colonial, Modern Latin American Art, Latino Art and Native American art--but because of the various organizational resources available to art and art history students, which create a Mecca for those seeking to study in these areas. The Latin American and Iberian Institute and the vast array of participating departments offer valuable resources to support graduate student research, and create a veritable treasure trove of courses for students wishing to work in or on Latin America. The University Libraries house one of the three highest ranked collections in the United States for the study of Latin American art. The strength of the library’s collections in Native American art is even rarer nationally. With its geographical proximity to Native American communities in the state and its historical and contemporary ties to native communities and cultures, which have been enriched over the years by art history faculty, UNM is an enviable site for research and education in Native American art. The UNM Library system’s Center for Southwest Research houses important contemporary Latin American and Native American collections, as well as highly respected collections in Pre-Columbian and other indigenous arts. This center and its collections are yet another remarkable resource for the art history program. Two collections contain important prints in these areas as well – the CSWR and the University Art Museum have one of the three largest holdings in the United States of Mexican popular art, the *Taller de Grafica Popular* of Mexico, and the *Samuel L. Slick Collection of Political Posters from Latin American* (over 12,000 in all). It is no surprise that the UNM art history program in both Latin American and Native American art ranks among the most highly respected university programs

in these fields. Much more could and should be done to support and strengthen these program areas to enable them to maintain their positions of national leadership in these areas.

Faculty devotes considerable energy to enhancing and updating the art history curriculum to produce the most positive possible learning environment for their students. The most recent expression of this commitment is the revision of the art history curriculum which is currently under way. Currently, the art history curriculum has two graduate study tracks: Arts of the Modern Age and Arts of the Americas. These intersect in various ways, but generally Modern Art comprises the study of Western Art from the 18<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, which may also include modern art in Latin America and Native America. Arts of the Americas includes the study of ancient Latin American art from prehistoric times to the present day. These two excellent curricula cover a wide range of material, but they leave out a comprehensive study of Western art from the prehistoric period through the mid-18th century. Courses are taught from these periods, but they don't easily fit within the two existing concentrations. The new curriculum would bring courses now offered in areas of medieval art (which articulate with the Medieval Studies Institute at UNM), Italian Renaissance, and Baroque Art into a comprehensive concentration. A necessary, but presently missing, element to staff adequately the new graduate degree tract is the hire of a Classicist to teach Ancient Art. Such an appointment would also benefit the existing curricular tracks. Modern Western art relies on a knowledge of classical art, and legacies of the Classical Tradition are very common in Latin America. The Mediterranean and the Caribbean are wedded together at least partially by classical architectural traditions.

### **Electronic Art:**

The Electronic Area has a strong faculty cohort of three professors whose research and teaching embrace an interesting and significantly vital range of practices. Associate Professor Mary Tsiongas, hired 9 years ago to launch this as a new area, has built an interesting curriculum on what appears to be a shoestring budget. The sustained support of Electronic Arts Lab Manager and lecturer Brian Kimura has been critical to this effort. Four years ago, Professor Tsiongas was first able to hire a colleague, Assistant Professor Claudia Valdez, who was joined this year by Assistant Professor Lee Montgomery. Recent awards and exhibitions for student work in prestigious venues such as Ars Electronica in Linz, Austria and the Contemporary Museum in Baltimore make it clear that this team is developing Electronic Art into an internationally recognized area. As digital and electronic technologies become increasingly recognized and understood within the arts, we feel that it's important to move more department support in this direction.

In touring the Electronic Art area, the limited amount of lab space was striking. While the addition of a classroom in another building is a sign of progress, we couldn't help but notice that the computer lab facilities in the Photo area were larger and better equipped, despite only recent conversion to digital from dark room chemistry. Electronic art faculty expressed concern about duplication of teaching in media such as video, taught as part of some photo and sculpture courses, and suggested that students from other areas could be encouraged to take electronic art classes to gain these skills. This seems to form part of a bigger picture of competition for students and overlap of computer resources in the department. All areas need access to computer resources, but to build a strong electronic art area requires especially dedicated equipment for students concentrating their work in electronic mediums. Judging by national trends, the

criticality of this need will only increase. The ISEA (Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts) conference “Machine Wilderness,” to be held in Albuquerque and Santa Fe in 2012 with most activities held at UNM, is an important indication of the program’s potential for international significance which could be achieved through better support of new media in the department.

With increased funding and space for diverse Electronic Arts classrooms and labs, this area could become a significant department-wide resource. Just as drawing has been considered a foundational skill, the electronic art area could offer basic skills to all students that they could take back to their different areas. The fact that beginning video skills are starting to seep into the practices of painting and photography is indicative of both interest and need. It is an unusual strength of this area that the three electronic arts faculty members have backgrounds in such diverse arenas as sculpture, video, installation, performance, broadcast, social practice, immersive technologies, physical computing, internet practices and even ceramics. The department could benefit to a far greater degree from this dynamic.

### **Art and Ecology:**

Art and Ecology, an innovative new program focused on social practice art in the environment, bridges academia with community practices in the state. Professor Bill Gilbert is to be credited with pushing an older art and environment program in a visionary new direction. That he secured prestigious and significant funding from external sources benefits the department enormously both in terms of prestige and cross-disciplinary pedagogy. While we were not able to speak with students in this area, or to Professor Gilbert who was on sabbatical, two other faculty members, Assistant Professor Catherine Harris and Associate Professor Andrea Polli, were knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They each bring significant art world prestige to their teaching, as well as courses that are vital and unusual for a university art curriculum.

This is essentially a new program in the sense that it offers a deeper engagement with environmental activism and sustainable agriculture compared to the older program which encompassed a range of traditional art practices inspired by the New Mexican landscape and the region’s diverse cultures. What Art and Ecology offers is a way for artists to engage in social relations and actions that bridge academia with outside communities and sites. As yet a small area, they are linked to a larger emerging trend in art departments that are starting programs about art and social practice, such as at California College of Art, UCSC, Portland State University and Otis College of Art. Despite some complaints we heard from faculty in other areas about resources focused on Art and Ecology, and some complaints from Art and Ecology faculty about difficult access to resources in other areas such as the sculpture woodshop, it appears to be a very self reliant unit. Furthermore, there are several obvious points of overlap that could build into interesting and innovative collaborations: land art sculpture practices, Pueblo pottery, the painting in the environment class, electronic art projects such as Neighborhood Public Radio, and documentary photography practices. We recommend a more fluid and open exploration of cross disciplinary possibilities such as the team-taught course by Professors Gilbert and Tsiongas that involved taking students to land art sites in the Southwest.

### **Sculpture:**

The sculpture area seems to be divided between general contemporary practices that include mixed media, land and public art, and the more targeted metal shop area. This span offers a diversity of skills that will be diminished when Professor Steve Barry retires. Although no one mentioned sculpture as a future hiring priority, it seems critical to retain a senior faculty member



who works with a similar span of media as Professor Barry. He has been a bridge to other areas, for example in his collaborative teaching with Professor Mary Tsiongas. For several years they have team-taught cross-disciplinary courses in which they raised funds to take students on field trips to cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

Two years ago sculpture hired an exciting new Assistant Professor, Ellen Babcock, who is clearly bringing vital new practices and skills to the area. However, it is not possible for one faculty member to run the contemporary Sculpture area alone. It appears that Assistant Professor Babcock is somewhat isolated in her teaching interests and in need of effective mentoring to move toward tenure and promotion.

A recent initiative involving a three-area collaboration between Sculpture, Electronic Art and Art and Ecology in graduate student admission selections is a positive model for increased fluidity between areas. From the report we got from graduate students, it seems to be working. A similar collaborative approach to shared workshops and labs could create further progress toward cooperative department area sharing. Creating specific short-term skill and safety workshops, for example, instead of requiring students to take an entire wood shop course, could help open up resources.

### **Painting and Drawing:**

The painting and drawing area seems to embrace a vital diversity of approaches, and at the time of our review we were able to view an impressive range of student work. These strengths persist in spite of the loss in recent years of 2 full time tenured faculty members, a situation that has required the current 5 faculty to stretch their time and resources in problematic ways. Vital class offerings such as the Painting and Drawing Graduate Seminar have had to be cut, and faculty are rarely able to teach courses connected to their particular area of research. This situation impedes the ability of the area to respond to contemporary developments in painting and drawing, a significant loss for students.

It seems clear that Painting and Drawing needs a new faculty line to maintain excellence and relieve the pressure of cut resources. In the Program Review document, they express a need for an additional line that could be “devoted to 4-6 visiting artists to the area a year.” Visiting artist programs are an important aspect of many art departments across the country, a way to expose students to a more diverse range of contemporary “real world” art practices. In the present economic climate, this need might be served through a department-wide program in which diverse visiting artists draw students from all areas.

Finally, the innovative environmental land course taught by painting professor Michael Cook appears to have a logical link to the Art and Ecology program. We wonder if it would benefit students and the department to create more formal links across the two areas in relation to similar content.

### **Printmaking:**

With the exciting new hire of Assistant Professor Shaurya Kumar, who has already started rebuilding the historical relationship to the Tamarind Institute, the Printmaking area seems poised to thrive. This was confirmed by our visit to the Tamarind where we met with director Marjorie Devon, who was quite enthusiastic about new possibilities for collaboration. It struck us that the Tamarind Institute has an important history, and provides a significant partnership resource, yet has a very different pedagogical goal in its exclusive focus on technique. We feel

it's important for the Print area to assert a stronger pedagogy of content in their curriculum to go with the requisite intensive technical training. Students need to learn not only how to make, but what to communicate in their print production.

In Professor Shimano's enlightening tour of the Print facility, the deficiencies of the physical plant became glaringly obvious. The space was tightly divided and cramped; with only one common area, two classes are not able to meet as a group at the same time, making scheduling very awkward. Despite the fact that Printmaking facilities in most university art departments now include photographic processes, there are no photo resources within the print area. Furthermore, it seems that printmaking students do not have access to the digital photography facilities nearby. This division between printmaking and photography seems out of date and not productive since both function in the realm of print media. Integration of photographic and computer processes with traditional printmaking techniques would make this a stronger area.

### **Photography:**

The Photography area has historically been bolstered by high national rankings and the prestige of its faculty, now diminished by the retirement of Patrick Nagatani. We wonder if the much touted ranking of photography may have kept it less integrated with the other areas than it otherwise might be. Just as with Electronic art labs and the sculpture wood shop, the photo labs could become a critical department-wide resource. A senior hire in this area could be chosen to introduce more of a collaborative vision with other areas such as printmaking and electronic art.

Photo area facilities, except for the newer computer labs, are cramped and the renovations from chemistry to digital are incomplete. Photo is to be commended for giving up older practices related to color printing and for embracing new digital photo practices. The shift away from dark room practices toward digital processes, more in tune with contemporary image developments and also cheaper for students, is very positive. It seems critical that the department receive the necessary resources to complete renovations, especially given flooding issues.

### **Ceramics:**

The new Arita area in Ceramics helps make this one of the most diverse ceramic labs in the country. It also leaves the facility cramped and in need of updating. On paper, the diversity of combining a Japanese pedagogy of ceramics with contemporary western stoneware and Native Pueblo pottery, seems visionary. But in talking to students and faculty, we encountered the opinion more than once that this was a decision handed down from the top (under the mantle of "diversity" and "cross-divisional collaboration") rather than a decision emerging from widespread departmental consensus. More vigorous and equal department support for all three practices, each quite vital to a dynamic ceramics curriculum, could help mitigate these tensions.

It also appeared to us that Ceramics, especially the new Arita area, is somewhat out of step with other Art Studio practices in its exclusive focus on the pedagogy of technique, especially as part of the larger 3-D area. We could envision a more dynamic relationship between ceramics and sculpture, for example, or between Pueblo Pottery and Art and Ecology or between painting and ceramics. Art History courses could help contextualize the cross cultural differences and similarities of practice.

### **Studio Foundation**

The new foundation curriculum developed by Assistant Professor Ligia Bouton, geared to combining technical and conceptual skills across areas, is one of the most innovative in the

country. It is to the department's credit that faculty with very different pedagogical approaches were able to unite around supporting this new curriculum. In its first year, it appears to be thriving. The syllabi we reviewed in which concepts such as "Light" and "Mark" frame a series of readings and projects allow different instructors some latitude in defining projects while at the same time reflecting a unified foundation theory to prepare students for more advanced courses in all areas. Overall, our impression of this program is that it provides an effective model for bridging archaic divisions between media and areas toward a more integrated overall arts curriculum.

## **V. Facilities**

Facilities in art history are badly in need of upkeep and maintenance. The technology in the lecture hall, for example, produces only fuzzy images, an untenable situation considering that reproduced images themselves are so far from the reality of the actual work of art. The most up-to-date technology is essential to train students to view and discuss works of art from the closest visual perspective possible. Moreover, we heard complaints about more basic needs, such as a lack of chairs in classrooms and broken desks. Such inadequate resources affect faculty and student morale.

The strongest, most unified critical feedback we heard from Studio Art graduate students concerned their studio space at the Maddux and Annex buildings. Their descriptions of the facilities' poor ventilation, lack of cell phone reception, and inadequate internet access concerned us deeply because it harms student morale and could put them in danger.

Flooding, incomplete renovations, and lack of space seem to severely impact several areas: Photography, Print Making, Ceramics, Electronic Art and Sculpture.

## **VI. Students**

Meeting with graduate students in two separate groups---art history and art studio-- was especially revealing of the strengths in this department. In both cases, the students were outstanding, and we were impressed by the number of international students and the diversity of the graduate student cohort. Students attributed the department's appeal to two factors: the department's strong reputation in various highly prized areas of study, and the quality and commitment of the art and art history faculty. The students overwhelmingly praised faculty for their dedication, approachability, and availability. Students praised faculty for being on the cutting edge of the discipline, engaging with current material, and devoting considerable attention to diversity. They also praised faculty scholarship and seemed well aware of the quality of their academic and artistic contributions. They described the faculty as intellectually generous, wanting to see their students succeed, and pushing students to really grasp new material --as one student put it, one always feels a challenge, never a threat. One art history graduate student noted that he was offered a generous financial package elsewhere, but chose UNM because of its faculty and its program, and despite its lack of resources. A large number of Art and Art History alumni have secured jobs at major art and art history institutions.

### **Graduate Student Feedback**

The ten graduate students from art history, with whom we met gave uniformly high praise to faculty in terms of the breadth of their knowledge, the quality of their pedagogy, the degree to which they inspire their students, and the amount of time and support they devote to their students. We were impressed with their enthusiastic praise of the faculty, which seems to point to

a dedication to teaching which is unusual in research universities. Specific comments cited faculty as being approachable despite superstar status, intellectually generous, and nurturing. The students were enthusiastic about the recent recruitment of art critics Dave Hickie and Libby Lumpkin, saying that the two new hires filled an important niche in the department and would help strengthen the links between art and art history and studio art.

It became evident from the diverse testimonies of the art history graduate students that most had chosen UNM because of its unique and innovative approach to contemporary art of the Americas. Respect for the program was expressed not only by students from the United States, but by students from Latin America. For example, a student from Mexico stated that she came to UNM because programs in her native country were too traditional and the UNM program gave her much better training in art history. Students praised the department's interdisciplinary approach to visual culture, which was strengthened by the recent hiring of Dave Hickie and Libby Lumpkin. In addition, students cited the substantial library resources as being critical to their education. Their perceptions of hiring needs in the department were somewhat different from those noted by faculty: they recommended that the department hire a specialist in African art history, especially in relation to the modern history of photography. They also stressed the need for another Latin Americanist to help compensate for Holly Barnet-Sanchez's assumption of administrative duties in the Dean's Office.

The single strongest criticism from art history graduate students concerned their access to opportunities for fellowships and teaching assistantships. Several students said they had lost support since arriving at UNM, and opined that had they known about the university's current financial difficulties they would have chosen a different school. We heard various personal testimonies about financial hardship, and many complained about the lack of funds for faculty and graduate student research.

Fourteen Studio Art graduate students also gave high praise to faculty in the department. We heard from graduate students in the Photo area that faculty there were accessible, and as teaching assistants they felt that they were treated like colleagues. They expressed enthusiasm about their ready access to art historians and to studio faculty in other areas. A few students stated that official channels between areas are inadequate, but that they had been able to establish personal connections on their own. They said that cross-area contact with printmaking was possible after the first year review, but not before. All seemed to desire a more interdisciplinary approach among the various areas for students at the graduate level.

Some Studio Art graduate students expressed a desire for more access to resources across areas. For example, students have no access to Photo resources. Students reported a need for better technology in the printmaking facility. In Ceramics, the shelves are warped and kilns are in poor shape. Many also complained that more courses solely for graduate students were needed because at times they felt unchallenged in the courses that combined graduate and undergraduate students. One suggestion was to have one graduate seminar per semester that was limited to graduate students and mixed students from all Studio Art areas. In relation to qualifying expectations, they cited a reliance on oral instruction over clearer online and written information about final paper requirements, reviews of work, etc.

A number of the studio art students expressed dissatisfaction with the way the Arita Ceramics program had been launched. They were not opposed to it in principle, but felt that the decision did not necessarily reflect academic considerations, and had been dealt with in a way that made

them feel marginalized and afraid to speak up. They perceived that infighting among faculty had filtered down to students in negative ways.

One of the things that impressed us about the grad students was that they are quite enterprising. They produce a scholarly journal which is shared, and to support it they hold bake sales whose proceeds are matched by the dean. They hoped that proposed budget cuts would not prevent them from continuing to produce the journal.

Financial cuts in the department's budget for Teaching Assistantships and Graduate Assistantships have created an especially dangerous morale issue among both faculty and students. This year, there were 93 graduate students in the department – 73 applied for money from the department with only 50 being funded. Students feared that the coming year will be even worse. Rumors have abounded such as the one that half of the current graduate students would not receive any support next year. Already, rumors of further drastic cuts have led some art history graduate students to consider leaving UNM. As the graduate students described the situation, many students considering UNM for their graduate studies have now decided against it, and as this information spreads beyond the university it is harming recruitment of future graduate student cohorts. Students are well aware that the university administration is asking departments to make deep cuts to their academic budgets, including their GA-TA funds, at the same time that the university is erecting new buildings on campus and is creating a new UNM campus in a neighboring city. This does not bode well for morale, even within the best UNM programs such as those within the Art and Art History Department, and low morale combined with damaging financial cuts can quickly debilitate departments. Such damage could take years to repair. This is a crisis situation for the department, and it must be addressed immediately if the department is to maintain the quality and prestige that it has traditionally enjoyed. The priorities of the college need to be addressed if this situation is to be reversed before it does irreparable harm to the department. It is extremely important that the department's budget contain a sufficient number of TAs, RAs, and GAs to support its graduate students if the department is to maintain the high level of graduate students it currently attracts. We urge the university and the department to seek additional funding sources for student support from various sources, such as private foundations or alumni.

In summary, the art history program is among the most respected programs of its kind in the nation, and various Studio Arts areas, especially photography, are among the best ranked programs in U.S. universities. However, for the department to maintain its academic standing, the University must step up with financial support in several areas. Graduate student funds are badly needed to maintain the high quality of students and to enable the department to compete effectively in attracting future students. The latter is now in question due to rumors of poor funding for such students. Faculty need better salaries, along with more adequate funds for conference travel and field and library research. Classrooms and studios need better facilities. Eventually, a new building will be necessary to accommodate both studio and art history needs. A new position in Classical Art is needed to complete the comprehensive art history program already in place.

## **VII. Closing Thoughts**

In speaking with representatives from all areas of the Department of Art and Art History, the review committee became aware of numerous strengths as well as some specific targets for improvement. One of our most salient impressions is of a highly committed faculty who work

incredibly hard and receive high praise from students – despite comparatively low salaries. More so than in many comparable art departments, this faculty maintains rigorous research practices and has garnered significant prestige. This is an invaluable asset that must be protected by increasing, not diminishing, support for faculty in their teaching, research and service activities. With more graduate students than any other department in the college, it is critical as a retention issue that faculty teaching not be increased above a 2/2 load. It is also critical that salaries and research support be augmented wherever possible.

The Department of Art and Art History is unique among comparable institutions in uniting the practice and theory of art into one department with a high degree of cooperation. This, along with the strength of individual studio and history areas, contributes to its excellent reputation. In studying all the areas of the department, we perceived an overall need for a stronger vision of cooperation between studio areas. Our tours of the physical plant confirm the department's own assessments that structural repairs are urgent in several areas, that inadequate equipment and furnishings such as projectors and chairs are impeding art history lectures, that graduate student annex buildings are isolated and dangerous, and that new space needs to be opened up for the emergent areas of Electronic Art and Art and Ecology. It is a very positive development that on the graduate level, Electronic Art, Sculpture and Art and Ecology have started to collaborate on admissions decisions across the 3 areas. We recommend that other areas also do this. Graduate students unanimously expressed a desire to break down area barriers; and faculty who work and teach across media expressed frustration with limited access to various shops.

In both studio and art history, the present and future cuts in funding for TAs and GAs has created a crisis situation in the morale of both the graduate students and faculty who rely on these TAs and GAs for their support of both faculty teaching and research. It is incumbent upon the administration to find other ways to deal with financial problems than cutting funding for graduate students.

It seems that the department's efforts to admit a diverse student body, one that reflects the New Mexico population, has been highly successful. The faculty is less diverse; further effort over time can be made in this direction.

The hire of Professors Hickie and Lumpkin, both art critics, adds a significant and innovative breadth to the department and increases its national and international standing in important ways. In their first year, courses they teach are already attracting students and professors from other departments and divisions, a unique dynamic that brings prestige to the entire College of Fine Arts.

Here are some specific answers to questions raised in the department Self Study:

- It does not seem wise in this economic climate to add new areas to art studio. Increased support to existing areas, as well as formulating sensible links across areas, seems like a better strategy. A more shared approach to resources would help this dynamic.
- In art history, a new Classical area hire is critical to filling a notable gap.
- It seemed that a new building within the next 10 years is unlikely; therefore we are making no recommendations at this time.

- The change of department name to Art, Art History and Visual Culture seems like a good idea given the actual content of the curriculum. This name also more accurately reflects contemporary developments in the discipline.

Over all, we left with a strong impression of the strengths of the Department of Art and Art History and its prominence within the College of fine Arts and the university as a whole. This reputation needs to be protected and nurtured by a higher degree of administrative support, especially in the current budget climate. With relatively modest input, the faculty and students could gain the kind of support that will keep the department strong and retain its national and international standing. Internally, we feel that the department has both the desire and talent to continue building innovative programs that increasingly cooperate, collaborate and augment each other.