Congratulations on your decision to go to art school! We’re here to help you prepare one of the most important parts of your application: your portfolio. Applications will be due before you know it—the time is going to fly by fast—so it’s best to get started now. We hope you find this guide useful and full of answers to any questions you might have.
Are you ready to make a difference in the world?

California College of the Arts is a place for people who believe creative work can positively and powerfully affect our society. People who want to make art that matters.

An arts education has never been more relevant or more valuable. Today, creative people are recognized as necessary to help solve the world’s most pressing problems. And CCA students, alumni, and faculty are at the cutting edge of every creative field, working in industry and the community, and founding enterprises of their own.

CCA’s dedicated faculty—all of them practicing artists, architects, designers, and writers—will encourage you to explore your interests and passions. You will develop your own unique voice and style while engaging in dynamic, contemporary conversations about such crucial issues as innovation, sustainability, and social justice. Our two campuses, both located in the lively, diverse, and forward-thinking San Francisco Bay Area, offer a dynamic setting for you to pursue your dreams.

CCA is a place of promise and transformation, boundless energy and vision. I invite you to join us.

Stephen Beal
President
A portfolio presents your best work.
It is both personal and passionate. It should tell us who you are and what you truly care about. Every portfolio is unique and there is no single, perfect formula for creating one.
The San Francisco Bay Area is a global hub of entrepreneurship, sustainability, renewable energy, and social activism (25,000 nonprofits and counting!), not to mention design and technology (think Apple and Google). It is also a high-density center of creativity, with more than 250 art venues and a renowned mix of historic and modern architecture. Surrounding CCA’s campuses in San Francisco and Oakland are neighborhoods and cities alive with international cultures and buzzing with pioneering ideas. There is no better place to forge your unique creative path as an artist, architect, designer, or writer.

Above all else, a successful portfolio is always evolving. It gives a glimpse of where you are now, and your potential to create even greater work in the future.
The First Year Program immerses you in an artistic community. The curriculum prepares you for the challenges of college through a set of studios tailored to your intended discipline, including courses in the humanities and sciences. You will explore your established areas of interest, discover new ones, and develop into a self-motivated student and creator. You will be based on CCA’s Oakland campus, a traditional college setting with impressive facilities and residence halls. Eighty percent of first-year students live on campus. The residence halls are home to several themed communities, which bring together students with specific shared interests.

On campus and off, you will develop your expanded community, making memories and developing relationships that will last a lifetime. Connect with fellow students at exhibitions, yoga classes, and potluck dinners. Bike to College Avenue to visit bookstores and cafes, or take the train to San Francisco to check out galleries and museums. Both San Francisco and Oakland are diverse and dynamic, with thriving, world-class arts scenes that are waiting to be explored.

where to start?
At CCA no single discipline, philosophy, or medium confines you. You can feel safe taking risks. While you major in one subject, you’ll explore many. The curriculum is interdisciplinary, and a sense of discovery and curiosity permeates every classroom and studio. Walking around either campus, you will see students expressing their ideas through painting, sculpture, fashion, video . . . and media that defy categorization altogether.

Self-motivated students can develop their own unique program of study through the rigorous Individualized Major, combining studio work in two or more disciplines.

Students come to CCA because they want the freedom to explore, to push boundaries, and to learn from each other while they craft a personal vision. What you learn and create is informed by literature, history, philosophy, politics, economics, science, technology, and more. No matter what your specific area of concentration may be, you will leave CCA with the tools and knowledge to create a meaningful body of work and the confidence to pursue your goals.

PUSH BOUNDARIES

A few suggestions to get you going, motivate you to continue, and help you kick it into overdrive:
CCA’s founders believed that connecting the arts to economic, political, and social life would deepen the power of creative work while making a positive contribution to the community. This belief in social justice and community engagement still influences everything we do today, not just at home in the Bay Area but all around the world. Our students are strengthening ties locally and globally. They are learning while embedding themselves in, and engaging with, communities of all kinds.

Our Industrial Design students, for instance, are working with a San Francisco senior center to improve its systems and communications. A Photography student spent the summer helping local Mission District teens learn the art of the camera. Our Textiles students are traveling to Oaxaca, Mexico, to learn from local artisans and assist them in improving their national visibility and marketing efforts. And CCA and a major Beijing art school just signed an exchange agreement that will benefit and enrich both institutions for years to come.

Carry a sketchbook, camera, journal, or notebook everywhere you go. Fill the pages completely. Add collage to give it some texture.
Students come to CCA because they want to use their creative energy to make the world a better place. They are artists, designers, activists, and entrepreneurs. Many dedicate themselves to issues that may at first seem unrelated to the arts: social justice, community development, sustainability, diversity. But CCA encourages you to make art that matters, to be in touch with your passions and what moves you. This translates into hands-on experience outside the studio.

Through ENGAGE AT CCA courses, the Center for Art and Public Life, and sponsored studios, you can collaborate with schools, nonprofits, and businesses to accomplish goals and make a difference. You may choose to pursue a career in teaching through the SMART teacher pre-credential program. Whether you dream of creating groundbreaking designs to further a social cause, exploring sustainable and eco-friendly materials, or helping to preserve the planet, a CCA education prepares you to make bold and innovative contributions.

Take risks. Don’t worry or overthink things. Give yourself permission to create—even if it turns out bad. This is how you set yourself free to develop your work.
Novelist and publisher Dave Eggers has come to campus as a guest lecturer. He also collaborated with architecture students on redesigning the offices of his literary journal, McSweeney’s.

The French artist Aurélien Froment contributed a solo presentation to The Exhibition Formerly Known as Passengers at the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts.

Artist in residence and guest faculty member Mario Ybarra Jr. examined the history, anecdotes, and mythology surrounding mural making in the Bay Area. He installed a mural of his own in the CCA Wattis Institute entrance hallway.

Consume art. Art is everywhere. Look at all the work you can, talk to other artists, view films, and attend slams and readings.
Post offices in the Netherlands.
Fast food in San Francisco.
A random tree in Switzerland.

For Emily Craig and Jon Sueda, the world of design is a cultural crossroads.

I went to an intensely academic high school, where kids were pressured to follow a traditional college track. But if you really love art or design, aren’t you better off doing that than getting a law degree?

Jon doesn’t put a lot of distance between himself and students, even though he’s an incredible, and very successful, designer. If you show an interest in something, he’ll run to the library and grab you some books about it. His class got me really comfortable with exploring.

I spent a summer at the Basel School of Design in Switzerland, the birthplace of modernism. I met people from all over the world, and we still get together every year.

I’ve had internships at the California Academy of Sciences, at the studio of one of my professors, and here at CCA in a special design studio that produces most of the college’s publications. CCA printed 30,000 copies of one of my projects!

I just interviewed at Wired magazine. They’re known for their groundbreaking design—really beautiful information graphics and typography. San Francisco is an inspiring global design hub.

When you visit CCA, you have to experience the energy of the studio spaces. On the surface they seem messy and chaotic, but there’s such a strong underlying structure, and the students are so focused.

Emily has the skills and—more than anything—a rare enthusiasm. Her work ethic is super and she’s a real self-starter. Most people don’t develop that until grad school.

After college, I did an internship in Holland. There, great design is everywhere, from the police cars to the postal service. You see it just walking around the city. This summer I’m taking students there to share with them some of those amazing experiences.

Students come away from CCA with really strong portfolios. At any art school you have to focus, and by the time you graduate, you should know what you want to do. Here, students home in on that very early.

Graphic designers today are self-producing more than ever, writing and creating their own publications. It’s an interesting aspect of today’s design culture. I self-publish a design and visual culture magazine with friends from Minneapolis and the Netherlands.
For Jesse Crimes and Tammy Rae Carland, great photography begins with a strong concept and clear, critical thinking. Here, these two talented storytellers offer a look through their lenses.

Jesse

My first photography teacher told me that if you’re interested in a particular college, look at the work of its faculty. Tammy Rae’s work totally amazed me. Now she’s my advisor and I can’t wait to take all the classes I can with her.

At CCA, I’m learning how to create a well-composed storyline. I find inspiration in books. Henry Miller and James Joyce had a really poetic way of showing the beauty in everyday life. I want to do the same thing through photography.

I’ve been stopping people on the street at night and taking their portraits. They are people I’ll never see again and know nothing about. But in a flash, we’re sharing a moment in time.

CCA’s Photography Program is like a little family. You take a bike ride, go shooting, get coffee. We throw ideas back and forth and help each other.

Since I was 17 I’ve wanted to join the Peace Corps. I’d like to go to Morocco or Romania. Then I’ll get my master’s degree and teach photography here in the States.

Tammy Rae

It’s exciting to see a student who always works at, and contributes at, his or her full capacity. Jesse’s work is strongly idea-driven; he’s a real storyteller. He sets the standard for responsibility as a student, and he’s not intimidated by rigorous feedback.

San Francisco’s history of film, video, and photography attracts a dynamic faculty from around the world. We’re all doing that crazy simultaneous-career thing, working and teaching. We serve as good models to the students for what a life in the arts really is.

As chair of CCA’s Photography Program, I go to all the students’ shows and am very plugged into the progress of their work. CCA attracts very advanced, capable students who keep me on my toes as a teacher.

Your career path isn’t going to be laid out for you like a yellow brick road. You construct it as you go along. At CCA, you’ll gain the capacity to problem-solve and self-direct—abilities that are crucial to any career.

CCA has this duality of being a very rooted, century-old institution with a firmly established pedagogy, but with a very contemporary spin. The college really respects its history yet is completely fearless about change.

Document your work. Take pictures of anything and everything you make. Catalog, collect, store, and file.
Yolla

CCA teachers are so engaged and encouraging. They’re really open to interdisciplinary work and using all sorts of media.

Linda was one of my first teachers at CCA. She’s very sensitive to color and texture—the same things I appreciate in artwork. In her class, I started experimenting with textiles and eclectic materials, and she helped me along by exposing me to the work of established artists with similar interests.

CCA is open to cross-pollinating skills and techniques. Or if your process is traditional painting, that’s OK too. You can experiment here and find your own path. The sense of community is really strong. That lattice of support is a rare and wonderful thing.

People think of painting as something you do on your own, but it’s actually where I feel the most collaborative, the most deeply engaged in dialogues with others. My fellow students and I illuminate one another.

There’s always something “once in a lifetime” going on at CCA. Lectures with artists at the top of their fields. Projects with people from totally different backgrounds.

Linda

There’s an interesting kind of openness about CCA students and faculty. It’s flexible for everyone. There’s an incredibly positive spirit here.

All the programs are interdisciplinary. No one will say, “You should only be painting on canvas.” You are free to incorporate sculpture, photography, textiles... It mirrors what’s happening in the contemporary art world.

CCA empowers students to come up with their own solutions. That entrepreneurial spirit is contagious here.

This is the perfect environment for Yolla. She has an idiosyncratic way of looking at the world. She’ll bring in a giant bag of fabric and start making something, with no idea what’s going to happen. She’s very comfortable with her creativity.

"CCA is the best time in my life so far." Again and again I hear people saying that. This is where you will meet your community.

Seek out an arts community. Begin to connect with people who share your interest in art, and support one another. Join a club at your school or become a fan of CCA on Facebook (www.facebook.com/CaliforniaCollegeoftheArts). You never know who might turn out to be your biggest supporter, even a mentor. Everyone you encounter will help your process in some way.
Hanh

I chose CCA because of its diversity. Most of my inspiration comes from my classmates and the hard work they do. It’s so amazing to watch them take their ideas from preliminary concept to final product.

I made an observational documentary that was selected for three film festivals: one in Los Angeles, one in Montana, and one here in San Francisco. It’s about this guy down at Fisherman’s Wharf known as the Bush Man. He carries around an actual bush, hides behind it, and pops out and scares tourists passing by.

Rob has helped me grow as a filmmaker. I’ve known him for two years and I’ve taken three of his courses. He has drastically changed my approach to style, look, story, and collaboration. He is very realistic and truthful with us about the film world and what it demands.

Thanks to Rob, my advanced production class got to volunteer as extras in a scene in Gus Van Sant’s movie Milk.

Flame to Custard is a film company I recently founded with three CCA alumni. Filmmaking is such a collaborative process, it’s much better to work with friends than alone with a camera.

Rob

Our students are interested in all kinds of film. As a teacher I find it really energizing. It’s unusual to have so much variety in one program.

Hanh is so humble, but her work is very, very strong. She pulls off her ideas in surprising and disarming ways. She hasn’t even graduated and her work is being shown at festivals. That is a real accomplishment.

CCA encourages its faculty to maintain a synergy between their teaching and their professional lives. Similarly, students can apply what they learn in class to their studio work, then bring that experience back to the classroom, where we talk about how they can do things better, or differently.

So much learning happens out in the field. A big Hollywood production like Milk comes to town and my students get to participate: How great is that?

Among my most recent projects are two films: one for the History Channel about the year 1969, and another about Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Howl,” which led to an obscenity trial in the late 1950s.

Attend a pre-college program.
The best way to know if art school is really right for you is to actually try it out.

CCA offers an outstanding pre-college program. Find out more at www.cca.edu/precollege.
Kyle

I looked at a few schools in other cities, but let’s face it: If you want to study architecture, San Francisco is hard to beat.

I was a CCA team project manager for the 2009 Solar Decathlon, an international architecture and engineering competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. We built a solar-powered house on the National Mall in Washington DC. Our team drew from practically every program at CCA, and thousands of people toured the house.

I took a studio course with Antje two years ago and my outlook on architecture clicked with hers. Later I took a part-time position at Studio Urbis, where she works, and we’ve developed a real professional dialogue.

I just spent two weeks in Istanbul researching my thesis. It involves how architecture can organize public space. The site I’m looking at is a major transit hub, with a train station, a subway station, trams, five ferry docks—just a huge number of people coming and going.

I want to get a job in Europe after I graduate, and both of my advisors have reached out to their extended networks on my behalf. Eventually I’ll become part of that network and able to do my part to help the next round of students. Moving forward, that feels good.

In architecture, national borders are just so many lines on a map. A new idea for a subway station in Switzerland could transform transit in Tulsa. That’s why Kyle Belcher and Antje Steinmuller are constantly searching for universal solutions.

Antje

Kyle has actually given me reading assignments, rather than the other way around! Our relationship is very enriching for both of us. He’s one of two undergraduates who petitioned to do a master’s thesis this year, and I’m one of his advisors.

As instructors, we can’t ignore the environment. Students should be researching the cutting edge of green materials. Even if new technologies aren’t yet applicable to architectural practice, it’s important that we understand them.

San Francisco is an ideal place to study issues such as population density and cultural diversity. I’m always asking, “How do we incorporate diverse needs into our designs?”

A lot of our faculty members are international, and we’re very supportive of students who want to go abroad. I just led a travel studio to Vienna, Berlin, and Basel.

CCA tends to attract people who know what they want. Our students come to us with a very specific understanding of what our program is about, a desire to balance theory and practice.

Read about art.

CCA students recommend the books Art Forms in Nature, Blue and Yellow Don’t Make Green, Four Things I’ve Learned About Designers, How to Wrap Five Eggs, The Art of Possibility, Orbiting the Giant Hairball, The Artist’s Way, The Blank Canvas, and Art & Fear.
Daniel

Why is working at Pixar the holy grail of animation? For starters, coworkers like Buzz, WALL-E, and Lightning McQueen. Daniel Gonzales and Andrew Gordon bring bold ideas to life. When I submitted my portfolio to CCA, I liked how honest the feedback was. Other colleges sugarcoat it, and I liked that CCA didn’t.

My Pixar internship was pretty intimidating and the learning curve was steep, but I kept up. They put us in production mode, as if our work was going to be made into a movie. I still talk to my former coworkers there every week. I’m keeping that connection.

Andrew’s great. You can ask him any question about your work, or what it’s like in the real world of professional animation. He knows how to make the classroom feel like a real work environment.

Animation isn’t just about drawing. You have to learn how to express your ideas. You need to get your poses down, and be clear. What the computer can do is awesome, but you have to tell it what to do bit by bit.

As long as I’m animating I’ll be happy, even if I’m at a tiny studio. If I don’t end up working at Pixar or Dreamworks, I’ll make the most of whatever I do.

Andrew

I love to teach. I take everything I’m doing at Pixar and feed it back to the students.

Daniel was accepted to the Pixar internship program on the basis of one assignment: animating a half-full sack of flour. His sense of timing and storytelling impressed everyone. He has a lot of raw talent and instructing him is just a matter of focusing that talent.

Right now, I’m working on Toy Story 3. It’s a really, really good movie.

Ultimately, the computer is just a glorified pencil. If you want to come to CCA, do as much life and gesture drawing as you can. Being an animator involves the computer, of course, but it’s more about being able to draw and tell a story.

So many CCA students have a clear vision. They’re totally focused and want to do a good job. That’s what makes it fun to teach here.
Every portfolio is unique. Make it your own; don't just copy someone else's style or structure. It should demonstrate your range: range of work, range of skills, and range of interests. Don't limit yourself to one particular medium or your intended major.

Show us *everything* you're capable of.

Observational Drawing, or Drawing from Life:

These drawings are an essential part of your portfolio, no matter what art school you are applying to. They are made directly "from life"—that means live-in-person looking, seeing, and interpreting. They are translations of three-dimensional objects onto two-dimensional paper.
In your first year of cross-disciplinary study, you will develop solid foundational skills in two, three, and four dimensions as you prepare to enter your intended major. Core studio courses focus on visual literacy, effective communication, craft, research, presentation, collaboration, and the art of constructive critique. Writing and humanities courses will strengthen your writing proficiency and critical skills as well as your familiarity with the history of art, design, architecture, and literature. Through a choice of studio electives you will investigate various media and possible majors.

At the end of the first year is Portfolio Review, a capstone experience in which faculty members review your work and help you define your path for the years to come.

Consider subjects

Everything around you is potential subject matter, from friends and flowers to the objects on your desk and the shoes under your bed.

Challenge yourself to draw contrasting textures: glass, fur, metal, lace . . .
CCA is committed to the idea that to be a good maker, you must be a knowledgeable and critical thinker. Your Humanities and Sciences courses will give you a substantial education in art history, writing, literature, history, diversity studies, the social and natural sciences, and philosophy.

This broad, integrated curriculum complements and enriches your studio practice. It will also help you become an informed citizen—an architect, artist, designer, or writer who actively and imaginatively transforms culture. You can even choose to minor in Writing and Literature or Visual Studies. While honing your analytic, conceptual, and interpretive skills, you will deepen your understanding of the ideas and values that shape our world.

You will approach the same subject differently with a pen in your hand versus a paintbrush. Try painting and drawing the same thing and see how changing the medium changes the results.

Consider media.
There has never been a better time to pursue an education in the fine arts, nor a better place to do it than CCA. People around the world are seeking creative solutions to complex issues, and making art that matters is more important—and more relevant—than ever. CCA's eleven programs in the fine arts combine studio practice, critical inquiry, project-based learning, and interdisciplinarity.

You will experiment, hone your technical skills, develop your own conceptual framework, and be challenged to explore new creative territory. Critique is a cornerstone of all studio courses and a particular strength of CCA's programs. As you move through the curriculum, you'll be encouraged to experiment with many different media and take courses outside your discipline, collaborating with others and benefiting from their perspectives.

You can also take advantage of the proximity of MFA students enrolled in CCA's world-renowned Graduate Program in Fine Arts.

Our faculty members, themselves accomplished artists, will encourage you to be a rigorous thinker and creator. Every semester CCA brings to campus visiting artists and lecturers from around the globe to teach, critique student work, and connect you to the international art world. Interning with practicing artists, museums, galleries, community organizations, schools, studios, and production companies will build your network of professional connections.

Your senior year will culminate in the production of a cohesive body of work and a solo exhibition. You will graduate with the ability to realize your most adventurous ideas and the motivation to make a positive impact on the world—ready to succeed in studio practice, the professional workplace, or a top-tier graduate program.

Consider techniques for working fast and loose versus tight and controlled.

Observational Drawing, or Drawing from Life:
Consider techniques

Experiment with working
Tight drawings show strong draftsmanship, precision, and dimensionality. They are made slowly and deliberately.

Loose drawings are more about motion and rhythm. They are fluid, gestural, and spontaneous.

Observational Drawing, or Drawing from Life:
CCA is open to cross-pollinating skills and techniques. Or if your process is traditional painting, that’s OK too. You can experiment here and find your own path.

—Yolla Knight—
FOURTH-YEAR STUDENT

Observational Drawing, or Drawing from Life

Gestural drawings capture form and movement.

Contour drawings show the outlines of your subject. Imagine that your pencil is moving along the edges and ridges.
Idea Development:

This is the more personal part. It's about mulling over your concepts and intentions, and making sure your work reflects them. Your sculpture, photography, drawings, and poetry are always more powerful when they tell a story.
CCA’s award-winning, professionally accredited Architecture and Interior Design programs promote an understanding of design as a critical and evolving practice within a larger cultural context. The five-year, NAAB-accredited Architecture curriculum includes courses in urbanism, ecology, digital media, and interactive technologies. The CIDA-accredited Interior Design Program builds skills in research, design, materials technology, culture, and the human body in built space through courses in interior architecture, production design, exhibition design, and product design.

Both programs operate at the forefront of the field and will expose you to current and emerging digital tools while engaging you with global issues through internationally focused studios. You will be encouraged to seek out other disciplines that intersect with your practice, from industrial design to furniture, graphic design, and even glass, metal arts, and film.

You will have the opportunity to undertake special projects such as the Solar Decathlon, an international competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy (the cutting-edge solar-powered home designed and built by our students in 2009 placed first in the architecture category). The metropolitan culture of the San Francisco Bay Area is an urban laboratory, inspiring new ways to think about configuring space.

You will graduate prepared for the advances in culture, systems, technology, and interactive modeling that will define the 21st century. Our faculty members and visiting lecturers are renowned leaders in their fields and will offer you an enormous range of educational and professional opportunities, especially when it comes time for your internship. Our Architecture lecture and exhibition series will expose you to award-winning practitioners from around the world such as Jacques Herzog, Toyo Ito, Renzo Piano, Bernard Tschumi, and younger emerging practices such as FDX, MVRDV, and SHoP.

Consider a theme

Idea Development:

As an exercise to help you shape your ideas, try focusing on one idea or subject. Let’s say you like cats … but what about cats? Why do they grab your attention? What is it you want to say about them?
Green living isn’t a compromise. It’s the new standard.

CCA students — first-place winners in architecture in the U.S. Department of Energy’s 2009 Solar Decathlon.

Your work is always more interesting when it embodies you. Don’t be afraid to reference your culture, your ideas, and your community. Your story is a unique one, and your voice deserves to be heard.

Idea Development:

Consider your story
As creativity and innovation become increasingly appreciated throughout the world, professional opportunities for designers continue to grow. CCA's six programs in design prepare students to offer intelligent, creative solutions to the world's most difficult and interesting problems. You will graduate with a wide range of skills, a deep body of knowledge in your chosen discipline, and a comprehensive conceptual framework upon which you will continue to build throughout your career. Businessweek has recognized the strength of our design programs by naming CCA one of the best design schools in the world.

The San Francisco Bay Area is at the edge of the Pacific Rim, a hub of design activity and cutting-edge technology, and home to many of the world's best-respected firms in every design-related field. CCA's faculty members are active professionals and will help you connect with leading companies and organizations relevant to your interests. You will have many opportunities to participate in project-based courses that examine specific real-world issues related to sustainability, social justice, and more.

CCA students participate in global competitions in illustration, fashion, furniture, and more; complete prestigious internships in California, New York, and beyond; work for CCA's award-winning graphic design studio; and engage in industry-sponsored projects. Our students—while they were still students—have been recognized by such highly respected institutions and publications as Wired, Graphis, the Society of Illustrators, the Industrial Designers Society of America, the International Housewares Association, the Western Art Directors Club, and the Type Directors Club.
Feedback is a good thing.

Don't be afraid to expose your work and ideas to others and ask what they think.

Art is a shared experience. Of course art is what you make, but it's also about what other people see and how they interpret it.

Other people's opinions are crucial in helping you form your ideas and improve, change, or validate your artistic direction.

Talk to your parents, teachers, aunts, uncles, friends, friends of friends, parents of friends...you get the idea.

Solicit feedback early and often.

Getting Feedback:

Let's say it again: feedback is a good thing!

Art is a shared experience. Of course art is what you make, but it's also about what other people see and how they interpret it.
Students come away from CCA with really strong portfolios. At any art school you have to focus, and by the time you graduate, you should know what you want to do. Here, students home in on that very early.

—Jon Sueda—

Faculty

Practice showing and talking about your work in a clear and concise manner.

Get a thick skin. Cheer up, buttercup! Everyone starts somewhere, and usually it’s not at the top. Not all feedback will be what you want to hear, but it is all valuable. It should give you new energy and resolve. Remember that everyone has their own perspective and opinion, especially when it comes to art. Trust that the feedback is not intended to hurt your feelings.

Learn to listen. Are you hearing the same thing over and over? Take it to heart. Others may be seeing or experiencing something that you are totally unaware of. Listen carefully and use what you hear to make your work stronger.

Attend a portfolio review. Art college admission counselors are excited to meet students. They make regular trips to local high schools, and you can also visit them at college campus events and National Portfolio Days (www.portfolioday.net). They will look at your work and give you suggestions for improvement. Use these opportunities as trial runs as you prepare to officially submit your portfolio as part of your college applications.
Take good photographs. Your pictures should be crisp and clear, and they should clearly represent your work.

**five handy tips**

1. Take good photographs.
As a student in CCA’s Visual Studies or Writing and Literature programs, you will gain a deep understanding of visual and literary cultures. Our faculty members are all accomplished, published writers and critics. Class sizes are small, enabling you to develop close working and mentoring relationships with them. You can major or minor in either program.

Writing workshops focus on prose, poetry, drama, graphic novels, screenwriting, and beyond. Literature courses range from the historical to the contemporary to the experimental. Supplementary courses in fine arts, design, community arts, diversity studies, and more invigorate the writing process by offering a wide array of different perspectives. All are invited to participate in the student-run literary journal **Humble Pie**, our monthly faculty-student reading series, and activities associated with the MFA Program in Writing. You will leave CCA with a polished manuscript in your chosen genre and a significant piece of literary criticism.

The Visual Studies Program goes far beyond traditional art history. You will learn how to contextualize and interpret all things visual, from painting, sculpture, and graphic arts to architecture, photography, advertising, film, and the web. You can also take advantage of the college’s studio course offerings to gain firsthand knowledge of artistic production techniques. And each semester CCA offers an incredible range of exhibitions and lectures by distinguished artists, designers, and critics. Your training will open doors to careers in museums, galleries, journalism, interior design, retail, marketing, and advertising.

It’s great to have a mix of forms and styles in your portfolio, but at the end of the day it should hang together in telling a story about your work. It should be cohesive and coherent. Look critically at all your work and omit anything that doesn’t show you off in the best possible light, or that doesn’t contribute to the story you’re trying to tell. Are you starting off with something very strong? If you are a writer, proofread your work.
A CCA degree can translate directly into a job with important names in design, fashion, technology, media, and publishing. Our alumni have competed on the television show *Project Runway*, designed the graphic identity for MTV’s Video Music Awards, and worked on characters for *Ratatouille*, *WALL-E*, and *Transformers*. They have illustrated editorials for *Rolling Stone*, *Time*, and *Wired*. They have created Emmy Award–winning motion graphics for the Showtime series *Dexter* and an animated short that made the cut at the Cannes Film Festival. They have exhibited their work at the Whitney Museum of American Art and SFMOMA, published novels and short stories, and been lauded in the *New York Times*, *Artforum*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The accomplishments of CCA’s graduates are as impressive, diverse, and innovative as the graduates themselves.

*Consider presentation.*

Realize that how you present your work can influence others’ interpretation of it. All the pieces should be clear, unsmudged, and not damaged in any way. Use “loose” techniques if you like, but if you’re going to be messy, do it intentionally.

Application Deadlines

for fall admission:
February 1: Merit scholarship deadline
March 1: Priority deadline

for spring admission:
October 1: Priority deadline

Undergraduate applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. CCA continues to accept applications after the priority dates. You will receive notification of acceptance approximately three weeks after all required components of your application have been received.

Notification of financial aid will be mailed to you after your offer of admission.

Accepted students for the fall semester must submit their nonrefundable deposit by May 1 or the date specified in their acceptance letter, whichever is later. The housing application process will begin after the enrollment deposit is received. For students entering in the spring semester, the deposit due date is November 15, and housing offers are made on a space-available basis.

Transfer Credit

CCA honors the California Intersegmental General Education Transfer Credit (IGETC) curriculum and has established articulation agreements with many community colleges. For detailed information visit www.cca.edu/admissions/undergrad/credit.

Am I in this?

Last but not least:
All the images are uploaded, all the descriptions are entered, but before you hit "Submit" ask yourself:
Am I in this?
Am I confident that this conveys what I know how to do, what I like to do, and what I am passionate about?

Applying to CCA

Admissions Requirements

All applicants must submit:
1. online application
2. $60 application fee (CCA honors the College Board application fee waiver)
3. personal essay
4. official high school and/or college transcripts
5. portfolio (submitted via SlideRoom.com or on CD; first-year students should include 10-15 images; transfer and second-degree applicants should include 15-20 images)
6. two letters of recommendation

For details on all of these, see www.cca.edu/admissions/undergrad/application. In addition to the above, international applicants must submit proof of English language proficiency and begin procedures to obtain their student (F-1) visa. Visit www.cca.edu/admissions/international/applicants for full details.
There are three ways to submit your portfolio to CCA. Please do not send us original drawings or photographs, because portfolios cannot be returned.

1. **Online (preferred) via SlideRoom.com.** You can submit up to 20 still images, or a combination of still images and video. You must include on the CD a text file that clearly lists each file name, in order, and gives each artwork’s title, dimensions, medium, year, and any other relevant information.

2. **By mail on a CD.** You can submit up to 20 still images, or a combination of still images and video. You may also burn the writing samples to a CD, or submit them as printed documents with an essay portion. Writers may submit their portfolios as an attachment to their online application (with the title of the writing sample written in the essay portion).

3. **By attachment (writing samples only).** Writers may submit their portfolios as an attachment to their online application (with the title of the writing sample written in the essay portion). You may also burn the writing samples to a CD, or submit them as printed documents with a printed-out application.

CCA Portfolio Requirements

- **Portfolio Submission:**
  - **Creative Writing:** Submit writing samples totaling up to 20 pages of writing.
  - **Art:** Submit up to 20 still images, or a combination of still images and video.
  - **Video:** Submit a video of up to 5 minutes in length.

- **Specific Requirements:**
  - Include a text file that clearly lists each file name, in order, and gives each artwork’s title, dimensions, medium, year, and any other relevant information.
  - Portfolio materials should be submitted online via SlideRoom.com.

- **Portfolio Guidelines:**
  - All portfolio submissions must be original and cannot be returned.
  - All submitted materials should be submitted online.

CCA strongly encourages students to submit unique and creative portfolio materials that demonstrate their skills and abilities.

Visit Us

Undergraduate tours take place Monday through Friday, at 10 a.m. on the Oakland campus (5212 Broadway) and 1:30 p.m. on the San Francisco campus (333 Eighth Street). Register online for a tour at www.cca.edu/admissions/visiting/reservation. You can make an appointment to meet individually with an enrollment counselor Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Please contact us at least two weeks ahead to make an appointment to sit in on a class. CCA offers numerous events for prospective students, including on-campus Preview Days in October and March. Visit www.cca.edu/admissions/events for listings.

Financial Aid

CCA is strongly committed to making its arts education accessible and affordable. We award more than $17 million annually in scholarships to nearly 75% of our students. You must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be considered for all forms of financial assistance, including CCA need-based scholarships, federal and state grants, federal loans, and federal work-study. For details on applying for financial aid, visit www.cca.edu/financialaid.

CCA offers the following renewable merit scholarships to students entering in the fall term. For more information see www.cca.edu/admissions/scholarships.

- **Creative Achievement Award:** open to high school seniors
- **Faculty Honors Award:** open to all transfer students
- **Diversity Scholarship:** open to qualified students who demonstrate need and bring diverse experiences to the CCA community
- **CCA Scholastic Award:** open to national-level recipients in the portfolio categories of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards
- **CCA Portfolio Requirements**
  - **Portfolio Submission:**
    - **Creative Writing:** Submit writing samples totaling up to 20 pages of writing.
    - **Art:** Submit up to 20 still images, or a combination of still images and video.
    - **Video:** Submit a video of up to 5 minutes in length.
  - **Specific Requirements:**
    - Include a text file that clearly lists each file name, in order, and gives each artwork’s title, dimensions, medium, year, and any other relevant information.
    - Portfolio materials should be submitted online via SlideRoom.com.
  - **Portfolio Guidelines:**
    - All portfolio submissions must be original and cannot be returned.
    - All submitted materials should be submitted online.

CCA is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), and the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

The Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) is a NAAB-accredited professional degree. In the United States, most states require that an architect register and pass a state board examination in order to practice. NAAB is the sole agency authorized to accredit U.S. professional-degree programs in architecture.

CCA grants the following degrees: bachelor of fine arts, bachelor of architecture, master of fine arts, master of arts, master of architecture, master of advanced architectural design, master of architecture in urban design and landscape, and master of business administration.

For information regarding CCA's academic programs, financial aid, graduation and retention rates, cost of attendance, crime awareness and public safety (including the annual campus security report), and other general campus information, see www.cca.edu/right-to-know.

CCA is an equal opportunity institution of higher education and employment and is thereby permitted to nondiscrimination in the delivery of educational services and employment practices. In compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, such decisions will not be made irrespective of an individual's race, color, religion, religious creed, ancestry, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation), marital status, citizenship status, military service status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, mental or physical disability, or any other status protected by law. When necessary the college will reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities if the individual is otherwise qualified to meet the fundamental requirements and aspects of the program and perform safely all essential functions without undue hardship to the college and without altering fundamental aspects of the program. For more information about accommodations, visit www.cca.edu/students-handbook/regulations.

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