

MINNETONKA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Wayzata, Minnesota
Completed 2002

Minnetonka Center for the Arts is a fixture of the cultural and educational environment in Minneapolis' western suburbs for teaching fine arts of all disciplines. The existing facility, a renovated elementary school, had run the course of its usable life, concurrent with the growth of the educational programs to the point of overuse of the facility. The Minnetonka Center for the Arts needed a new building to meet the spacial and technical needs for the instruction of art, and a building to also illustrate the unique spirit of creating art.

The new structure represents a 30% increase in studio space, and completely replaced the existing building. It contains instructional studios in Ceramics, Painting, Drawing, Sculpture, Fiber Arts, Photography, Children's Studios, and Language. Additionally, it has an Exhibition Space, a Café, and Administrative offices.

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Each interior space is allied with an exterior garden space, stitching the building to the site. The site design reinforces the intent of the building design, illustrating the act of producing and teaching fine art.

The parallels between fine art and architecture are profound, and influenced the design of this building in significant ways. At its core, MCA is about the production and instruction of art in all its forms, and the building is intended to reflect this.





Three essential concepts guided the development of the design, as overt illustrations of the relationship between art and architecture:

1] The program spaces of the building are organized in an introspective, self-referential manner. This is reflective of two critical aspects of the project: the Center is a community of artists, students and instructors working together; and the various disciplines of art are intimately related to one another. The layout of the new building looks in on itself, allowing for the students of each discipline to interact with others, and strengthening the sense of “Center” among the students and instructors. The clearest illustration of this is the Main Courtyard, the “town square” of the Center, a place of display, conversation, presentation and reflection.

2] The program spaces of the building should be tied seamlessly to the site. Each space within the building, studio and exhibition alike, is related to an exterior space, courtyard or garden, allowing for a unique opportunity to explore light, shadow, scale, color. The additional freedom outdoor space allows the artist is an invaluable asset, and also provides the visitor with a refreshing experience.

3] Art is limitless in its scope. The creation of fine art has no limitations, and we have seen in the last century how far reaching the imaginations of artists can be. We have created moments within the building that will accommodate art of many media and of nearly any scale. These will be a regular part of the instructional program, allowing for students and instructors of any media to install a piece in a particular location. The most vivid of these is the “Art Wall,” a concrete wall on the north end of the Main Courtyard, essentially a blank canvas designed to support an installation of nearly any kind. It is the clearest statement about the instruction, production and exhibition of art within the Art Center.