

Rhode Island College Art Center

Rhode Island College Art Center has opened as the new home for the fine arts on this college campus, uniting programs that had previously been scattered into different buildings and occupying spaces ill-suited for their programs. The renovation and addition project was conceived as a complete transformation of the existing Art Center, into a durable, safe and light-filled space for creative pursuit.

The original one-story building was constructed in 1958 as a library, student center and dining hall, and converted into a studio arts building a few years later. The art studios lacked natural light and the building had many health and safety problems. The project team conducted extensive workshops with arts faculty and students to set out goals for the new Art Center, and then set out to expand the existing building to meet their needs.

Within the 54,000 sf expanded building there are now programs for a dozen separate artistic disciplines, each with dedicated spaces properly equipped to handle their equipment and processes. A two-story addition at the south end of the building, the second floor of which is clad in copper, provides additional space and a new main entrance at the front of the campus. A student gallery and extensive display spaces along public corridors provide an ever changing backdrop. State of the art digital classrooms and a new lecture hall have created opportunities to engage the community with lectures and events, and spaces for socializing provide serendipitous collaborations.

Most importantly, to the architects and the client, the new Art Center is filled with the natural light that is so important for the arts and that had been lacking in the previous building. Large northern-facing clerestory windows bring light into the painting, ceramics and sculpture studios, while in the center of the building, three large monitors allow light to penetrate the interior. The copper facade has already begun to develop a rich patina, playing off the campus standard tan brick.



Architects: Schwartz-Silver
Location: Providence, RI, USA
Executive Architect: Design Partnership of Cambridge
Area: 54000.0 ft²
Year: 2014
Photographs: Courtesy of Schwartz-Silver
Engineering: Pare Corporation, Thompson Consultants
Landscape Architecture: Diane C. Soule & Associates