Decade of the Arts
University of Notre Dame
Decade of the Arts

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I have spent much of my academic life studying the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. In retrospect, such a course of study seems fitting, given that Aquinas is the patron of Catholic universities, colleges, and schools, and Notre Dame is often regarded as the face of Catholic education. Aquinas is called the “Angel of Divine Truth” because so much of his work deals with the nature of angels; St. Thomas spends pages in his works speculating on how they communicate without voices, come to know the world without sense organs, and express themselves without bodies. By reflecting on the incorporeity of angels, we can better understand through contrast what it means to be a human being with a body.

Unlike angels, we do communicate with voices, experience the world through sense organs, and express ourselves through the movements of our bodies. Through art we come to a most profound understanding of what is good, beautiful, and true.

In the Catholic tradition, the arts have always been closely tied to worship and the experience of the sacred; art has always been central to the University’s commitment to learning, teaching, and serving, and it is of crucial importance to our continued growth as a community of learning.

With the opening of the Marie P. DeBartolo Center for the Performing Arts in 2004, Notre Dame entered its “Decade of the Arts”—a celebration of our arts legacy and fulfillment of our future.

You and I are not angels. Through the arts, however, we can have the experience of the beauty and transcendence that the angels enjoy.

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President, University of Notre Dame

“Better to illuminate than merely to shine, to deliver to others contemplated truths than merely to contemplate.”

—St. Thomas Aquinas
Great universities are “great” because they pursue the difficult whole of human experience. Art is one of the most important tools we have in this pursuit. Art can be uplifting, but it can also be shocking. Art can show us what should be, but it can also challenge us with the reality of what is. Art can be comforting, but it can also be disturbing.

For Catholics, the arts have also proved to be one of the most important incarnations of sacramentality: through the arts, the transcendent reveals itself in finite reality. Whether we’re admiring the Golden Dome amidst the activity of Commencement weekend or quietly reflecting near Ivan Meštrović’s Pietà in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, something moves within us that expresses what would otherwise be inexpressible. Art is a privileged way in which humanity learns to express itself, to innovate, and to create, reminding us of the uniqueness of the human spirit. At the University’s core since its founding, the arts also remind us of the distinction of Notre Dame, a place equally devoted to scholarly advance and its Catholic character. Perhaps nowhere else has the spirit that is Notre Dame been captured as well as it has been in the work of the numerous artists, all the way through to the present, who have made this campus their home.

—Pope John Paul II, Letter to Artists

The Arts and Notre Dame

“Beauty is the vocation bestowed on the artist by the Creator in the gift of ‘artistic talent.’ Those who perceive in themselves this kind of divine spark which is the artistic vocation as poet, writer, sculptor, musician, and actor feel at the same time the obligation not to waste this talent but to develop it, in order to put it to service of their neighbor and of humanity as a whole.”

—Pope John Paul II, Letter to Artists
1879 • The Great Fire of 1879 destroys the Main Building and the Joyce Recreation Hall, but not the Music Hall. New in its third incarnation, the Main Building is rebuilt on a greater scale that same year, although some of the most familiar features—paintings by Gregori and the Golden Dome topped by a larger statue of Mary—will be added over the next decade.

1882 • A brick performing arts center called the Academy of Music—which houses a new Music Hall and Exhibition Hall, containing the functions of the two earlier buildings—is dedicated in June. That same month, the original Washington Hall is demolished; the new Exhibition Hall within the Academy of Music officially takes on the name “the new Washington Hall” by Fall 1882.

1887 • The Notre Dame Marching Band plays at Notre Dame’s first football game and has played at every home game since.

1898 • Notre Dame becomes the first Catholic university in the United States to offer a degree in architecture.

1908 • Fr. Michael Shea (ND ’04, ’05) and his brother John (ND ’06, ’08) write the Notre Dame Victory March, which will become one of the most widely recognized college fight songs.

1913 • Junior Knute Rockne (ND ’14)—yes, that Knute Rockne—plays flute in the University’s orchestra. In 1915, he will play two roles in the senior play, The Girl of the Golden West.

1915 • The Notre Dame Glee Club, which will come to be regarded as one of the best all-male collegiate choral groups in the United States, will operate without interruption from this date forward. However, a campus glee club existed as early as 1874 and performed regularly if not continuously until 1912.

1924 • The University establishes the Charles A. Wightman Memorial Art Gallery, a dedicated exhibition space in Bond Hall, which at the time houses the Lemonnier Library and today is home to the School of Architecture.

1925 • Under the direction of Professor Frank Kelly, the premiere season of University Theatre is launched, continuing a campus theatrical tradition dating to 1885.

Our faculty is composed equally of distinguished scholars who study art and acclaimed practitioners of the arts themselves, making it possible to support the full spectrum of art-related interests. Here, a student who aspires to write the definitive history of silent films will receive the same quality education as the one who hopes someday to win an Oscar. For those students who do want to pursue careers as artists, they are more fully prepared to do so after receiving their education in a liberal arts context.

The School of Architecture applies this same integrated approach by not limiting its curriculum to principles of design and construction. Instead, the School's distinctive program is rooted in the application of traditional and classical architecture to the modern world, teaching students that the buildings they design must fit into the larger concerns of the communities they serve.

Among university art programs, those at Notre Dame place a unique focus on outreach programming, embodying the Catholic ideal of turning scholarship and creativity into service.

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1954 Rev. Arthur Harvey, C.S.C., takes over the University Theatre program

1955 Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrovic, considered throughout the world's greatest living sculptor of religious art, joins the University's faculty. His statue of Blessed Brother at Main Circle, and the statue of Blessed Brother

The building itself is a superb rendering of Notre Dame's traditional, collegiate gothic architecture conceived on a massive, 150,000-square-foot scale. Situated on the southern edge of campus, the DPAC welcomes visitors with a bold statement of purpose before they even set foot inside.

And when our visitors do step through the front doors, they enter one of the most dynamic university performing arts facilities in the country.

What do the New York Philharmonic and the Notre Dame Glee Club have in common?

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The University of Notre Dame has made an inspiring choice in linking its destiny to the flourishing of the arts, which serve not only as a window onto the mystery of God but also as a binding force in the service of community and the universal.” —Mark W. Roche, I. A. O’Shaughnessy Dean College of Arts and Letters

1990 Faculty members from the Department of English launch Notre Dame’s Creative Writing Program, a graduate program which now offers a master of fine arts. Graduates have claimed their work in a wide variety of prestigious forums, such as The New Yorker, Esquire, GQ, New England Review, and Puerto del Sol, as well as published novels and collections of poetry with major publishers.

1992 Pope John Paul II designates Notre Dame’s Sacred Heart Church a minor basilica, the major basilicas are in Rome.

1994 The School of Architecture gains autonomy from the College of Engineering. This is a crucial step in establishing the identity of the School as a distinctive center of excellence at Notre Dame, where architecture is an art form and not a technical pursuit.

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2000 The Fischoff National Chamber Music Association moves to Notre Dame. Focused primarily on education, the annual Fischoff National Chamber Music Competition is the country’s largest, drawing emerging instrumental chamber music ensembles from across the United States and around the world.

Vita, Dulcedo, Spes.
Life, Sweetness, Hope.

The University’s founding motto described a place that balanced the realities of a hard daily existence with the sweeter things in life, such as music, poetry, and drama. At Notre Dame, the arts have been intimately linked to the study of the sacred.

Two degree programs recently have been inaugurated: an interdisciplinary minor in Liturgical Music Ministry and a Master of Sacred Music (M.S.M.). At the undergraduate level, the goal is to prepare students, whatever their major or eventual profession, to play a role in the liturgical and musical life of their parishes. The M.S.M. is designed for students seeking full-time employment in churches as well as for those who will eventually pursue a Ph.D. in theology or music.

The new Fritts Organ in the Reyes Organ and Choral Hall was built mainly for the great organ literature of the 17th and 18th centuries, complementing the instrument already in place in the Basilica.

Studying the Sacred Arts

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Studying the Sacred Arts
“Notre Dame du lac was given to us by the Bishop only on condition that we establish here a college at the earliest opportunity. [T]his college cannot fail to succeed… There is still more we need to do to fulfill Fr. Sorin’s vision.

Selected Short-Term Goals:

• Promote the exhibition of the visual arts by increasing the amount of on-campus gallery space, bringing a Vatican Museum exhibit to the Snite Museum of Art.

• Seek endowments to increase support for student theatre productions; funding for costumes and a cutting-edge facility are already in place.

• Establish more endowments that enhance student production in all the arts. In addition to advancing our theatre program, these gifts will provide state-of-the-art equipment for film, media, and studio artists and allow us to expand our program of performance scholarships for musicians.

• Over the next five years, increase the number of undergraduate majors in the fine and performing arts by an additional 30%, bringing the total to 600 students.

• Actively recruit high school students who excel in the performing and/or studio arts, such that, by the end of the Decade of the Arts, those students consistently choose Notre Dame over peer institutions, and at least two-thirds of each incoming class has participated in the arts in high school.

• The state-of-the-art Marie P. DeBartolo Center for the Performing Arts opens. There are now four buildings on campus dedicated to the performing arts: the DPAC, Crowley Performing Arts Center, making them easily accessible for both campus and community audiences.

• The directorship of Summer Shakespeare is endowed with the creation of the Ryan Family Professor of Shakespeare.

• In association with its School of Architecture awards its inaugural Richard H. Driehaus Prize for Classical Architecture to world-renowned practitioner, theorist, and teacher Léon Krier. Driehaus is renowned for his contributions to the welfare of the traditional city and its architecture; Henry Hope Reed is the first recipient.

• In 2005, in association with its School of Architecture, the School of Architecture awards the first Henry Hope Reed Award, which was also established by Richard H. Driehaus. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to the welfare of the traditional city and its architecture; Harry Seidman is the first recipient.

Long-Term Aspirations:

• Make Notre Dame the place people come to learn about the art of the Catholic tradition. Create interdisciplinary programs that combine all the arts across departmental boundaries and have components of performance, aesthetics, and critical thinking.

• Graduate programs in emerging fields, such as a Ph.D. in Film, media, and visual culture, and an M.A. (M.E.A.) program in Shakespeare and Performance.

• Locate new buildings for the Department of Art, Art History, and Design; the Department of Music; and the Snite Museum of Art in a new facility near the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center, making them easily accessible for both campus and community audiences.

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As we look to our future, we must continue to attract new resources. For more information on support needed for our initiatives in the arts, please contact: Ramona Payne
Director of Arts Advancement
1100 Grace Hall
Notre Dame, IN 46556-5612
Phone: 574-631-9373
E-mail: Ramona.M.Payne.50@nd.edu

The directorship of Summer Shakespeare is endowed with the creation of the Ryan Producing Artistic Directorship of Summer Shakespeare.

• The Decade of the Arts will contribute to the University’s prestige, to the educational and spiritual growth of our students and faculty, and to the quality of life in our community.


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2004 For the first time since the University began tracking such data, a majority (52%) of the incoming first-year class has participated in theatre, music, and/or studio arts in high school.

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2003 The Crossroads Gallery—which is programmed by the Snite Museum of Art, the Institute for Latin Studies, and the Department of Art, Art History, and Design—opens in the Notre Dame Downtown office.

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1991–1992, band enrollments one of the largest in the country.

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