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THE ART OF
DESIGN

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Ask Michael Cinelli what the biggest change in the art world has been during his more than 20 years as head of Northern's art and design department and he can sum it up in one word: technology.

"The computer has revolutionized art and design," said Cinelli. "Because of today's technology, Northern has program concentrations that didn't even exist 20 years ago, such as electronic imaging."

Northern's art and design enrollment growth has been "nothing short of phenomenal," according to Cinelli. Art and design has taken over as NMU's second-most popular undergraduate program with 400 enrolled majors, dropping nursing and criminal justice, both with about 280 majors, into third and fourth. Education remains most popular with about 1,000 undergraduate students enrolled in elementary or secondary education programs.

Today, Northern offers degrees in 15 art and design areas: art education, ceramics, drawing and painting, electronic imaging, environmental design, digital cinema, furniture design, graphic communications, illustration, jewelry/metals and blacksmithing, photography, printmaking, product design, sculpture, and woodworking.

The department also supports the NMU Art Museum and a sculpture walk that features 10 sculptures on permanent loan to the university from artists around the world.

The explosive growth has been "both a blessing and burden," said Cinelli. "Renovations to our facilities are desperately needed to keep up with our department's increasing enrollment."

Art and Design North, one of three facilities used by the art and design department, is part of the east campus renovation project that just received state funding approval.

The other pressing challenge, according to Cinelli, is keeping up with the cutting-edge technology used in the field.

"Students interested in art and design programs today are very sophisticated in their knowledge of technology," Cinelli said. "They are not impressed with schools using computers, software and other art and design tools that are five or six years old—five and six years in the art and design business today is a lifetime."

Cinelli stressed two things about art and design at Northern that haven't changed during his tenure: "We have both a creative and a business approach to art, which really helps our graduates. Whether they choose to pursue an art-related profession or not, they have a strong business or education foundation they will be able to use. And, of course, our faculty members are as creative and passionate about teaching art and design as ever."

—Cindy Paavola '84 BS



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A children's rehabilitation center in Woodland Hills, California, designed by John Lautner.
Photo by Julius Shulman.

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One of John Lautner's most well-known residential designs, the Arango residence in Acapulco.
Photo by Julius Shulman courtesy of The John Lautner Foundation.