Faculty and students in the School of Art engage in regular critiques, discussing and exchanging ideas that connect their practices to broader debates in art, history, and politics. Students do not choose a major in the School of Art; instead, they work within an integrated curriculum while in pursuit of their four-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Students begin their studies taking a set foundation year of courses, after which, they may choose to focus in one or more areas of specialization while observing a prerequisite system designed to allow in-depth study in specific disciplines: drawing, film & video, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture.

This integrated approach to teaching and learning is a core Cooper value that means students are constantly exposed to different perspectives on the role of the artist in the public sphere. Through critiques, developing technical skills, experimentation across a variety of disciplines and mediums, and a strong intellectual grounding in history, theory, and criticism, students graduate from Cooper as well-rounded creative practitioners working to transform society.
Students begin their studies with the Foundation Program, which consists of a series of prerequisite courses taken during the first year. This introductory year is designed as a basis for the educational program of the School of Art and is intended to prepare students for studies in all of the disciplines offered within the curriculum. Through exposure to a variety of two- and three-dimensional projects, students are given a general introduction to the specifics of visual and spatial phenomena, and to concepts, principles, and techniques of the visual arts.

Following the completion of the Foundation Program, the disciplines offered are drawing, film & video, graphic design, painting, photography, printmaking, and sculpture. Elective studio classes and seminars are also offered on a rotating basis. Students may enroll in advanced studio classes with the same course number multiple times. Instructors and syllabi in these courses will vary. In addition, the content of advanced studio classes changes with the mix of students in each class. Consequently, the development of individual students’ work varies with the interchange of ideas among these students and their instructors. The School of Art believes that the ability to work with the same instructor in the same discipline multiple times (even as the course content changes) can foster a valuable mentoring relationship between an instructor and an advanced student.
The Student Residence Hall offers apartment-style housing for approximately 170 students during a typical year. Most apartments accommodate four students, comprised of two bedrooms with a shared bathroom and kitchen. The building is staffed by the residence hall director and eight resident assistants. There is a 24-hour security system, including guards, closed-circuit cameras, and alarms. Due to space limitations, Cooper Union is unable to guarantee housing, giving preference to first-year students. Assistance with off-campus housing is provided by the Office of Housing & Residential Education.
The Saturday Program offers public high school students the opportunity to take studio art courses taught by undergraduate instructors at The Cooper Union. Since its inception in 1968, the program has continually recruited talented students from historically underserved communities throughout New York City. By creating an opportunity for undergraduates to genuinely teach, the Saturday Program actively supports the creative development of both instructors and high school students. Through a thoughtful and reflective process, this work exists at the nexus of art’s praxis and social action.
FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Students in good academic standing may participate in exchange programs for one semester during their third year. The School of Art participates in student exchanges exclusively with the following schools:

Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Gerrit Rietveld Academie

Barcelona, Spain
Universitat de Barcelona

Basel, Switzerland
Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst (HGK)

Berlin, Germany
Berlin University of the Arts

Frankfurt, Germany
Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule)

Jerusalem, Israel
Bezalel Academy of Arts & Design

Kyoto, Japan
Kyoto Seika University

London, England
Slade School of Fine Art
Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design

Malmö, Sweden
Malmö Art Academy, Lund University

Paris, France
École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts

Prague, The Czech Republic
Academy of Fine Arts
APPLYING

The Cooper Union is highly selective and admits students based on the merit of their talent and potential. The School of Art offers both first year and transfer students the opportunity to apply early decision or regular decision. The first step in applying is to complete the Common Application.

HOMETEST

The Hometest is designed to help the Admissions Committee better understand each applicant’s relationship to visual imagination, concept development, and hands-on making. Applications will not be considered without full completion of the Hometest. The Hometest is sent to all applicants simultaneously, via email, a week after the online application closes. Each applicant receives approximately one month to complete and return the test.

FIRST-YEAR AND TRANSFER REQUIREMENTS

- Official high school transcript or GED certificate
- Official college transcript(s) (transfer applicants)
- TOEFL, IELTS, or DET score, if applicable
- Letters of recommendation (2 for transfer applicants)
- Completed Hometest
- Portfolio
- Sketchbook (recommended)

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Early Decision: December 1
Regular Decision: January 5
As an all-honors college, every admitted undergraduate student receives a half-tuition scholarship currently valued at $22,275 per academic year. Applicants will automatically be considered for additional merit-based scholarships. To be considered for need-based financial aid, students must submit the FAFSA (code: 002710).

The Cooper Union maintains its dedication to civic discourse through a variety of public events, talks, and exhibitions.
Join our mailing list
Sign up for an event or tour
Take a self-guided virtual tour