MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

University of Minnesota
At Minnesota, we believe architects develop a constructive balance with the many and diverse elements at play across the social spectrum. These include the individual and the community; private interests and the common good; the natural and the built environment; and others. This requires a comprehensive education with a thorough understanding of the cultural, economic and technological forces that shape our built environment.
Architecture is its own mode of thought with a unique and particular way of examining our environment and for finding solutions to make life more livable. Today design plays a expansive role in society and long-established architectural principles are more important than ever. The design studio has evolved as the pre-eminent tool to teach design and explore design thinking.
In a world that faces complex and urgent issues involving globalization, climate change and new technologies, our goal is to produce graduates who have the will and passion to engage these challenges. We have created a curriculum that instills in our students the confidence to grapple with large, messy problems and impassion them to ask the big questions and probe the specific ways to examine solutions. Throughout the 3-year program, students are pushed to think about and expand the definition of traditional architectural practice by including factors such as sustainability, research, cultural diversity and community outreach.
Traditional systems of higher education, those determined by old notions of disciplines or driven by the utility of specialized knowledge, fail when confronted with the dynamic character of changes triggered by globalization and new technologies. Expanding the role of architecture to encompass challenging urgent issues is important, but there are times when this is not enough. Sometimes the very role of architecture needs to be challenged. In these times, completely new ways of thinking must be encouraged.
The UMN School of Architecture’s new curriculum was the 2008 recipient of the AIA Education Honor Award and was praised for its’ out-of-the-box thinking and framing of cutting edge issues facing architecture.
The fall semester assumes that learning design is a maddeningly slow process that benefits from a high level of integration between studio and non-studio courses such as building technology, history, theory and professional practice. In contrast, our spring semester is structured into compact, intense modular courses that take a speculative approach to examine emerging trends. Shifting between different modes of work, students are prompted to develop a mental agility and critical thinking skills that prepare them to engage with the expanded and unfamiliar ways that architecture design is responding to the problems of the 21st century.
Modular courses offered each spring take a hybrid, speculative approach. Placed between these modules are four-day “catalyst” workshops. During these intense workshops, students work with small teams of regular, adjunct and visiting faculty in safe havens that encourage high-risk work. The short time period allows for more possibilities of collaborations that “fly under the radar,” free from the typical university constraints of course listings and semesterlong coordination. Shifting between different modes of work, students develop agility and alternate between working with known peers and mixed groups from different year levels and other disciplines.
In 2002, work was completed on the renovation and expansion of the building that houses the School of Architecture. The award-winning design by Steven Holl houses an architecture library, 260-seat auditorium, new graduate studios, exhibition gallery, outdoor demonstration yard, and expansive 3,500 square foot workshop. Scheduled for completion in 2011, a new state-of-the-art Digital Fabrication Lab will provide students access to the latest in manufacturing and prototyping tools including: a CNC router, mill and lathe; multiple 3D printing technologies as well as laser cutters and a vacuum former.
As a top-ranked professional program, the University of Minnesota provides such a comprehensive education. We offer distinctive study abroad opportunities, a strong academic and practicing faculty, and excellent facilities within the context of a top research university and a vibrant metropolitan area. Our program distinguishes itself from other programs by its focus on emerging trends of architectural practice in a rapidly evolving profession.
Minneapolis-Saint Paul is an ideal setting in which to study architecture because of its strong arts and design orientation. Located just across the Mississippi River from downtown Minneapolis, the UMN School of Architecture is in the heart of a dynamic metropolitan area of 3.5 million people. The Twin Cities are home to numerous cultural institutions including the Walker Arts Center, the Guthrie Theater, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the area has one of the largest and most active design communities in the country with over 250 firms doing work both locally and internationally. Moreover, Minnesota has a long history of supporting innovative architecture, evident in numerous influential buildings designed by the likes of Cass Gilbert, Frank Lloyd Wright, Eero Saarinen, Marcel Breuer, Phillip Johnson, Frank Gehry, Hertzog and de Meuron, and Jean Novel, just to name a few.
http://arch.design.umn.edu/

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