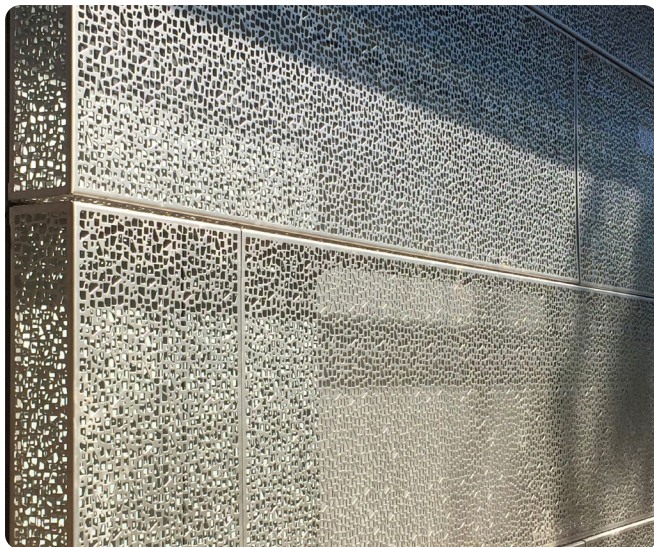


Visual Arts Building, University of Iowa

Iowa, USA

The Visual Arts Building at the University of Iowa, designed by Steven Holl Architects in partnership with BNIM Architects, will open on October 7, 2016. The new state of the art facility provides 126,000 square feet of loft-like space for all visual arts media, as well as galleries, faculty offices, an outdoor rooftop studio, and teaching spaces for Art History. The building is designed to encourage collaboration between all arts disciplines.



Natural light and ventilation reach into the core of the building via “centers of light.” The seven vertical cutouts are characterized by a language of shifted layers, where one floor plate slides past another. This geometry creates multiple balconies, providing outdoor meeting spaces and informal exterior working space, further developing zones for interaction between the building’s four levels. Stairs are shaped to enable informal meeting, interaction and discussion, opening onto lounge spaces for collaborative work.

The new building forms an Arts Quad with the adjacent Art Building West, which was also designed by Steven Holl Architects and has drawn students from all over the campus to its social spaces and

Environment:	Urban
Architects:	Steven Holl Architects
Photographs:	Courtesy of Steven Holl Architects
More information:	www.stevenholl.com

library since opening in 2006. The Quad sets the two buildings in complementary contrast; Art Building West’s planar, red-steel brachiating form extends out over the landscape blurring boundaries; for the Visual Arts Building, the landscape carves into the building’s zinc-clad concrete volume forming seven terraced light courts infusing the interior with light. A campus route threads through the largest court, the central Forum, engaging the larger university community with art programs.

The porous, layered skin on the south and west façades of the Visual Arts Building modulates direct sunlight into the studio interiors. A fine-grain perforated, etched stainless steel screen floats eight inches over a zinc and glass inner skin, creating shifting shadows and depth in relation to the adjacent ravine’s trees. From the studios inside, the screen’s perforated shadows are blurred in the capillary insulation of the translucent windows. From the exterior during the day the screen’s scaleless nature renders the sculptural carving of the building volume. At night the windows behind the screen become visible as a rhythm of glowing squares in Fibonacci proportions.

