

SOLEBURY SCHOOL



FINE ARTS NEWSLETTER

MEET OUR
DEPARTMENT

YOUR QUESTIONS
ANSWERED



SPECIAL ISSUE:
LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR FINE
ART DEPARTMENT

SEPTEMBER 2026

FALL TRIMESTER

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This page: Bella Pozderek

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COURSE PROGRESSION

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Above:Key Gottlieb

FROM THE EDITOR



We would like to welcome everyone back to a new school year! We are so excited to once again share the creative work our students produce with you each month.

To begin the year, we wanted to introduce our Fine Arts Department and say a little about our teachers. These five teachers are not only wonderful educators, but professional working artists who bring their own creative experience into the classroom. That experience is especially valuable for students who may be interested in pursuing art, design or another creative field beyond Solebury.

We also wanted to share some insight into how our courses progress from one level to the next. This can sometimes be confusing, and even frustrating, for students who have been told their whole lives that they are “good at art” and then find themselves beginning in a Foundations class.

Foundations is by no means a step backward. It reflects our commitment to giving students a strong preparation in the arts and making sure they have the skills, materials knowledge and studio habits they will need as they move into more advanced work.

Our program prepares students for rigorous college art programs, but that is only one part of what we hope to accomplish. Just as importantly, we want students to develop confidence, curiosity and their own creative voice.

And remember to follow us throughout the year:

Instagram: @soleburyschool_art

Facebook: Solebury Art

Above:: Micah Bloom

KELLI ABDONEY



Road to The Badlands, Wyoming

Kelli Abdoney brings the perspective of a working photographer directly into the classroom. Before coming to Solebury, she worked in journalism for nearly a decade in Glasgow, photographing a wide range of people and places. Her own work continues to focus on landscape, this Summer the American West, and explores the stories held in a place through its land, people and history.

A graduate of the Glasgow School of Art with a BA Honors in Visual Communication and Photography, Kelli has exhibited in Scotland and Pennsylvania, photographed weddings and private events, taught workshops in Spain and served as an artist in residence in northern Scotland. At Solebury, she also creates photography for school marketing, performances, events and publications.

In her classes, students learn both traditional 35mm film photography and darkroom printing as well as digital photography. They photograph on location whenever possible, then return to the classroom to critique and discuss their work together. Kelli also works closely with students as they develop portfolios and prepare for college applications.

For Kelli, photography is ultimately about much more than making a beautiful image. It is a way for students to notice what others might overlook, tell stories, communicate ideas and develop a point of view. Through the lens, students learn to show others how they see the world and, in the process, develop their own visual voice.

KELLI ABDONEY

Kelli very kindly shared her summer personal development trip to the American West with some of our faculty. For those of you who missed her presentation, we are so proud to share a few examples of her work here.



Cody Rodeo Rider, Wyoming



Cody Rodeo Barrel Runner, Wyoming



Cattle, Cody Rodeo, Wyoming

KELLI ABDONEY

Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, South Ridge



The Badlands, South Dakota



Abandoned town near Wall, South Dakota

JENNIFER BRITTINGHAM



Jen Brittingham Jewelry

Jen Brittingham brings together design, technology, creativity and problem-solving in her work with students. She holds an MS in Textile Design from the Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science. Jen teaches Graphic Design, Engineering and Yearbook.

Before coming to Solebury, Jen started the makers space at the Agnes Irwin School and led its Middle School Robotics program. Her own creative work continues outside the classroom through jewelry design, lapidary and production embroidery for semi-professional and professional ice hockey teams.

Jen is especially interested in the connection between art and science. She sees both as beginning with curiosity, experimentation and asking questions. In Graphic Design and Engineering, students use creative thinking to design, build, communicate and solve problems while discovering how creativity can move across disciplines and lead to new ideas. Additionally, Jen teaches Yearbook, a class that leads to the much anticipated yearbook in the Spring!

ERIKA FAIRCHILD



Erika Fairchild graduated from Beloit College with a degree in Studio Art and came to Solebury School in 2005. She teaches Ceramics at every level, as well as Printmaking, and Bookmaking.

Before joining Solebury, Erika worked professionally as a tile and mosaic artist for 16 years and as a production ceramist at the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works. She continues to work in ceramics and other process-driven media, bringing that same curiosity and willingness to experiment into her teaching.

Wood-fired ceramics is Erika's medium of choice, but she works across many materials, choosing the process that best suits the idea. Her work has included clay, cement, plaster, encaustic, oils, printmaking, bookmaking and puppet making, and she brings that same range of experience to her students.

Erika is currently rebuilding the 14-foot Anagama kiln on her property. Firing the kiln takes several days, large quantities of wood and a committed group of artists working together. That collaborative process is an important part of her practice, and it also gives Solebury students opportunities to learn alongside a wider community of working artists.

*Bottom left: Erika Fairchild,
Top right: Allison Tes*

KIRBY FREDENDALL



Kirby teaches Drawing and Painting, AP Art and Design and portfolio development. She earned her undergraduate degree in Art History from Duke University. After college, she attended Le Cordon Bleu and worked as a caterer, primarily in pastry, before earning her MEd in Art Education from Arcadia University with an emphasis in painting.

Outside the classroom, Kirby is a working landscape artist whose practice focuses primarily on oil painting and pastel. Her work is represented by several galleries and is included in the permanent collection of the Michener Art Museum.

When she is not teaching or painting, Kirby enjoys cycling, kayaking, paddle boarding and hiking in the Adirondack Mountains.

This fall, she will be one of six artists featured in New Talent: Six Rising Painters Exploring Landscape & Abstraction at Bridgette Mayer Gallery in Philadelphia.



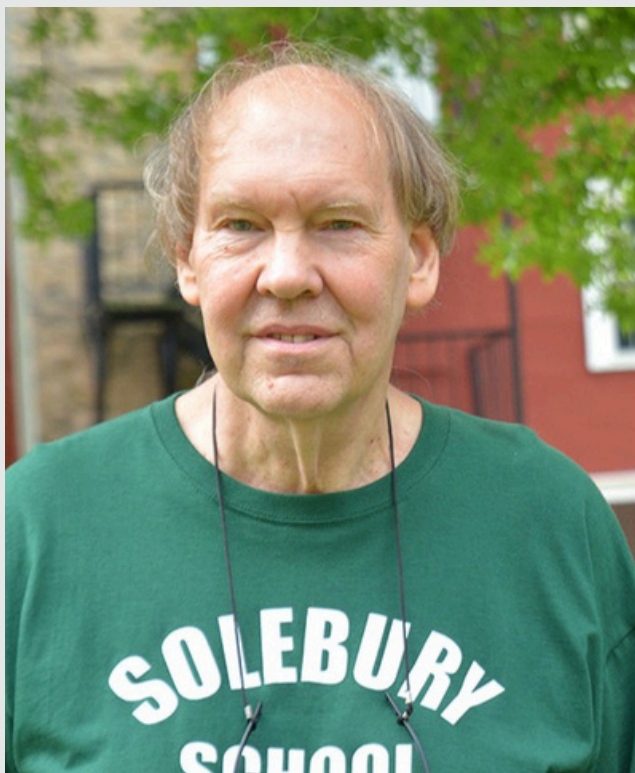
The exhibition brings together artists whose work explores landscape and abstraction through memory, emotion, color and material experimentation.

September 1 – December 19, 2026

Bottom left: Oi on acid washed tin, Kirby Fredendall

Top right: Exhibition postcard

CHRIS LANGHART



Chris Langhart has been a beloved mentor to Solebury students for nearly 20 years, teaching courses ranging from Theater Tech and Welding to AutoCAD and How Things Work. His teaching focuses on how materials, systems and people relate, and on helping students understand how things are designed, built and made to work.

Long before Solebury, Chris served as Technical Director and Chief Engineer for the 1969 Woodstock Festival, overseeing essential infrastructure including power, water, sanitation, staging and communications for an event that drew hundreds of thousands of people.

Chris continues that work today as Technical Director at ArtYard in Frenchtown, helping develop its theater and gallery spaces. For our students, that experience becomes something very practical: the opportunity to learn from someone who has spent a lifetime figuring out how things work, how to solve problems and how to turn an idea into something real.

WHAT IS “WORKING FROM LIFE” ?

What do we mean when we ask students to draw from life?

Before moving into Intermediate and Advanced Painting and Drawing, students need to be able to observe and draw real subjects in real space, whether that is a still life, a landscape or a person.

Many students have drawn for years, but often from photographs or imagination.

Foundations develops the observational skills they will need later and introduces them to pencil, charcoal, pastel, oil, acrylic, watercolor and gouache.

Foundations is not simply a beginner class. Students from all four grades may take it, often with very different levels of experience. Its purpose is to make sure everyone has the skills and material experience needed for upper-level work.

How can students demonstrate readiness for Intermediate?

Students may email a few observational drawings or meet with us to share their work. Last year, one student simply sat down in the classroom and drew the still life in front of them. That drawing became their ticket into Intermediate!

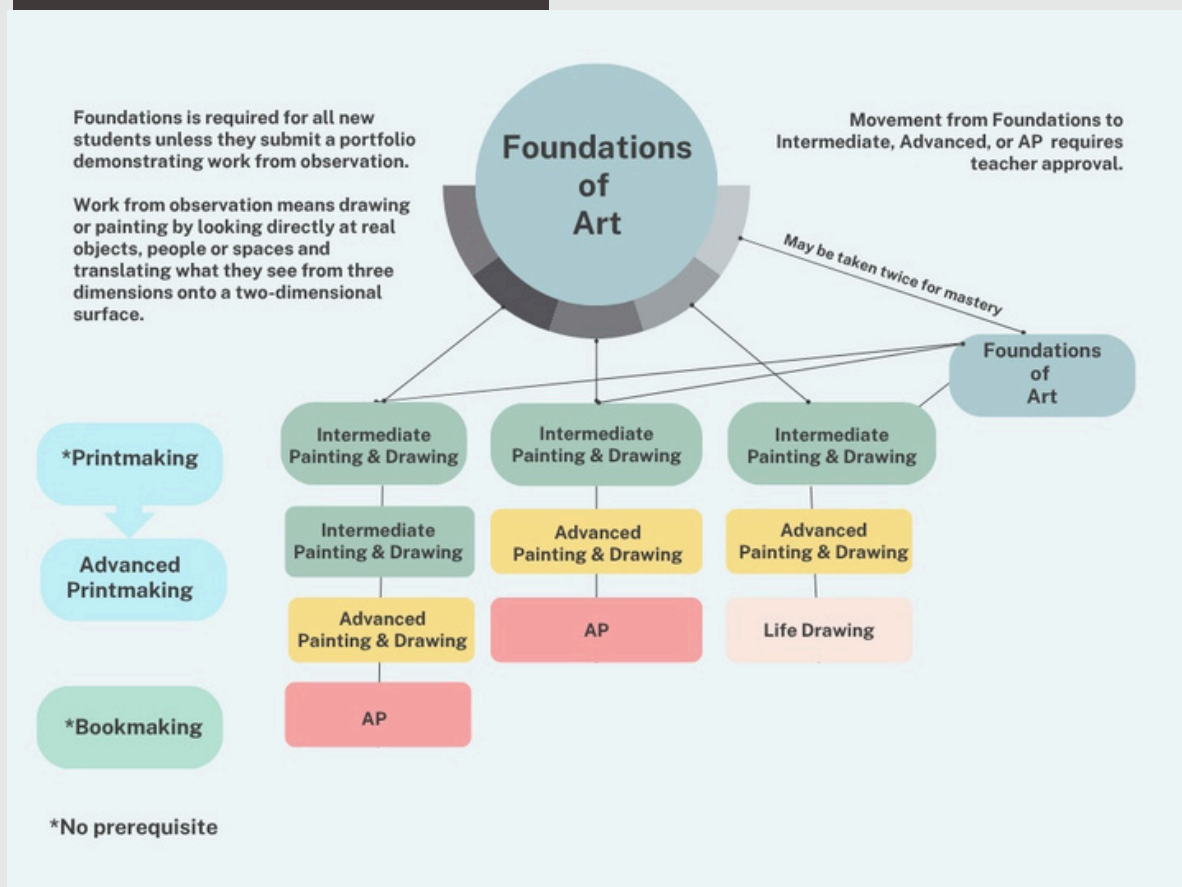


OIL ON PAPER: PAIGE MUSSOLINO



MARKER ON PAPER: AUDREY FEATHER

PAINTING & DRAWING



Learning to draw real objects and spaces strengthens all kinds of artwork, including more personal and abstract work. Skills such as understanding proportion, light, shadow and space give students more tools for expressing their own ideas.

Students may take Foundations more than once before moving into Intermediate, and Intermediate may also be repeated before advancing to the Advanced level.

The typical progression is:

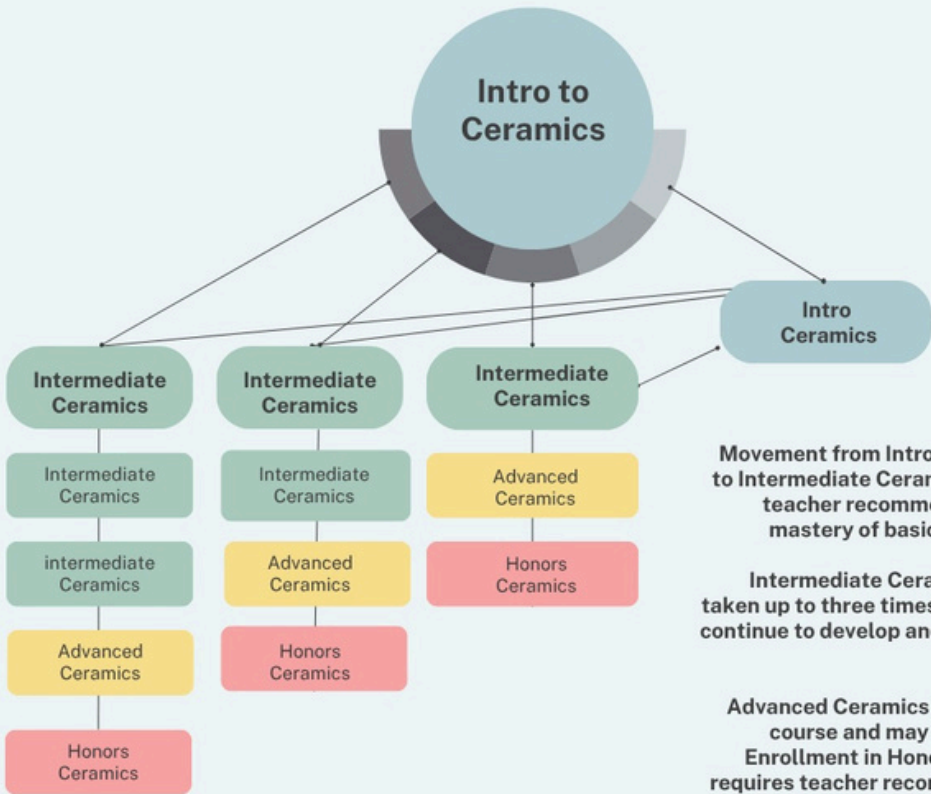
Foundations → Intermediate → Advanced → AP Art and Design

Students hoping to take AP Art and Design as seniors should plan to be ready for Advanced Painting and Drawing by junior year. There have been occasional exceptions, but Advanced is generally the preparation for AP.

Throughout the sequence, the goal is not simply to complete projects. It is to build a larger “tool chest” of skills, materials and ideas that students can use to develop their own creative voice.

Students interested in creating a portfolio for art school or as a supplement to college applications can begin that process at any point. They simply need to let their teacher know.

CERAMICS



Students come to Solebury with very different levels of ceramics experience.

Some may have worked with clay at camp or in an art class, while others may have taken a full ceramics course.

Introduction to Ceramics is not simply a beginner class. It introduces students to our studio, expectations and hand-building techniques. Students learn how clay behaves, develop control of the material and build skills through practice, experimentation and repetition. Mistakes are part of the process and often help students understand what the material can and cannot do.

Because ceramics has a steep technical learning curve, students may repeat Introduction to Ceramics before moving on. Intermediate Ceramics may also be repeated as students continue to build skill and confidence.

The typical progression is:

Introduction to Ceramics → Intermediate Ceramics → Advanced Ceramics → Honors Ceramics
Honors Ceramics is by instructor recommendation and requires permission to enroll.
Advanced Ceramics is strongly recommended first.

By the end of the Advanced level, students should have a strong foundation in ceramic materials, techniques and studio practices. Whether they plan to study ceramics further or simply want to continue making work on their own, they leave with the knowledge and confidence to keep learning.

PHOTOGRAPHY

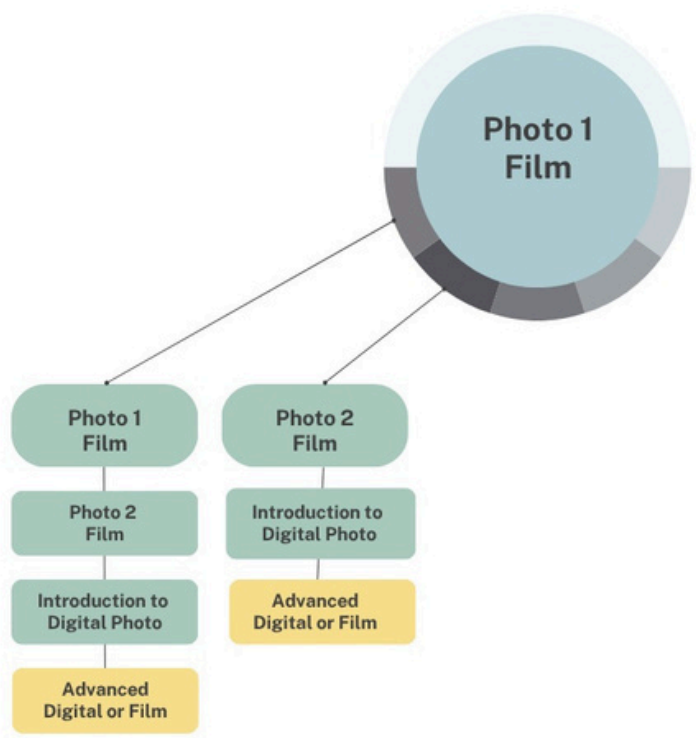
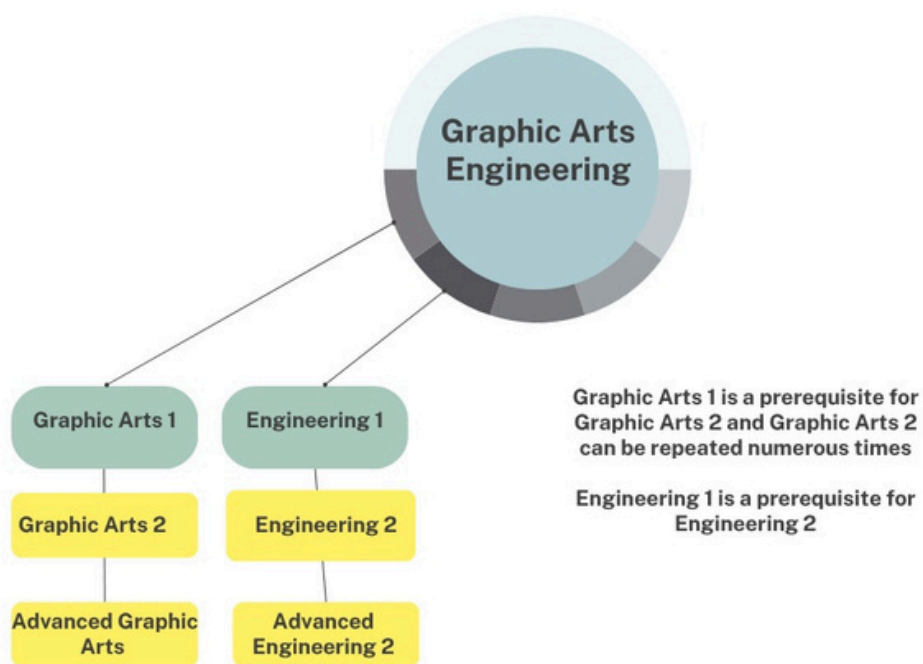


Photo 1 may be repeated before moving on to Photo 2.

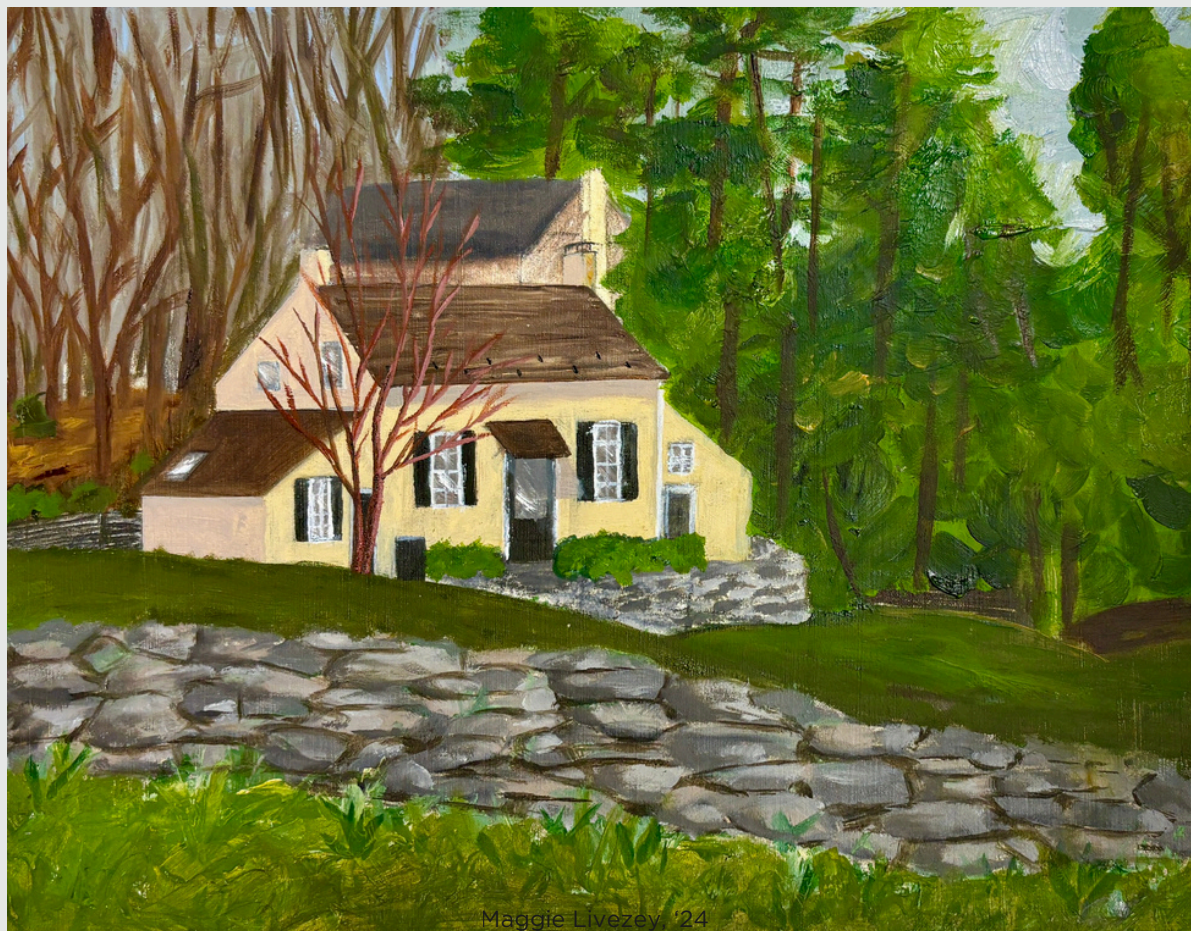
Students must complete both Photo 1 and Photo 2 before enrolling in Digital Photography.

Advanced Photography may be repeated throughout a student's time at Solebury.

ENGINEERING & GRAPHIC ARTS



WE ARE SO EXCITED TO START
CREATING THIS YEAR!



Maggie Livezey, 24

OIL ON PAPER, CAELAN COSTELLO