Architecture as an art was taught at the Yale School of the Fine Arts in the late nineteenth century. Precedence for this pioneering in art education was set as early as 1832 when the Trumbull Art Gallery (the first college-affiliated gallery in the country) was opened. This event signaled a commitment to education in the arts that culminated in 1869 with the opening of the Yale School of the Fine Arts, the first college-affiliated art school in the country. The department of Architecture was established in the School of the Fine Arts in 1916. In 1959 the School of Art and Architecture, as it was then known, was made a fully graduate professional school. In 1972 Yale designated the School of Architecture as its own separate professional school.

The School of Architecture offers a three-year program leading to the degree of Master of Architecture; a two-year post-professional option also leading to the degree of Master of Architecture; a two-year program for advanced, independent research leading to the degree of Master of Environmental Design; and a program leading to a Ph.D. degree awarded by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. The School also supports the Yale College undergraduate Architecture major and Urban Studies major. The School of Architecture and the School of Management offer a joint-degree program leading to the degrees of Master of Architecture and Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.). The School of Architecture and the School of the Environment offer a joint-degree program leading to the degrees of Master of Architecture and Master of Environmental Management (M.E.M.).