Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts
studio and curatorial practice

Graduate Student Handbook*

Department of Art & Art History
Florida International University
Miami, Florida

*Handbook disclaimer: *At the bottom right-hand corner of this (and every page) is the date upon which the most recent amendments were made. Acting within policies and procedures of FIU, the Chair of A+AH and/or MFA Program Director reserve the right to make necessary changes in the handbook without prior notice. The department will make every effort to alert students to any major changes to the handbook.*

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The **Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Visual Arts** is a production-oriented, studio art program directed toward individual development. The curriculum is designed for maximum flexibility to accommodate both those seeking advanced training in a particular studio area and those whose interests may involve more media crossover. Graduates of the program will be prepared for careers as professional artists. The MFA is the terminal degree in Studio Art.

A **Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in Visual Arts: Curatorial Practice Track** reinforces the Department of Art + Art History's commitment to exploring the links between practice and theory, and studio art and art history. It will prepare students to take a responsible and critical approach to the expanding role curators play in creating a vibrant cultural life in a post-millennial global society, which is increasingly being re-defined, re-drawn, and re-charted. The MFA is the terminal degree in Curatorial Practice.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Prospective applicants wishing to be admitted into the program must meet the University admissions requirements as specified in the Graduate Policies and Procedures Manual. They must provide the following: transcripts from all schools attended (a minimum undergraduate GPA of 3.0 is expected); CV (no more than 2 pages, single-spaced); three (3) letters of recommendation (from persons who are in a position to evaluate the applicant's previous professional and academic performance, as well as his or her potential for success in the graduate program); and for international and domestic applicants whose language of instruction for the undergraduate degree was not English, scores from Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), IELTS, and – beginning in Spring 2016 – PTE. *A TOEFL score of 550 paper-based/80 internet-based, IELTS score of 6.5, or a total PTE score of 53 is required.*

Applicants to the studio program should provide an artist statement (no more than 500 words) and upload it as well as a CV and slides of 20 artworks (300 dpi) onto http://getacceptd.com. Please note there is a nominal fee in addition to that for the general application for the latter. Applicants for the curatorial practice track, on the other hand, should upload a 400-word description of goals and objectives for entering the program and a 1,000-word proposal in pdf form for an exhibition with images (lo-res is fine) they would like to realize.

For the studio program, a BFA is preferred but an applicant with a BA will be considered for admission; for the curatorial practice track, a BA in art history or related field is

expected. Portfolio review and an artist statement are the primary means through which studio art applicants are admitted; whereas the exhibition proposal is an important instrument of measuring promise of curatorial practice track applicants.

A graduate selection committee composed of a rotating group of faculty members will make the final selection of those to be admitted and those to be placed on a waitlist. Those who submit their applications with all supporting documents by February 1st will receive priority consideration for admission.

POLICY ON FULL-TIME VS. PART-TIME STATUS AND FALL/SPRING ENTRY

FALL/SPRING ENTRY POLICY
We will accept students to begin in the fall (and as of 2014 in the spring with approval of graduate director and chair of the department). The director will allow students to defer up to a full year or one semester on a case-by-case basis.

FT/PT STATUS POLICY
The University defines full-time enrollment as 9 credits for each fall and spring semester. *Recipients of stipends from the University must be full-time students.* The number of credits a graduate student may carry without special permission is 15 each semester. The graduate director, department chairperson and the appropriate academic dean must approve a heavier load.

On a case-by-case basis we accept part-time students, as well, with the understanding that all requirements are to be completed in no more than five years.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

NOTES ON GENERAL COURSE STRUCTURE/TERM
For a balanced approach to graduate education, we strongly suggest that students enroll each term in a *studio tutorial* (independent work with check-ins with a mentor), a *graduate seminar* (a course on rotating topics with students from all years and occasionally both tracks), and an *art history* course.

Notes on triad of courses:

1. Independent Studio Tutorial

Every term, student receives a credit for working on his or her personal artistic and curatorial projects under the direction of a graduate faculty member:

Ms. Tori Arpad (ceramics/installation/eco-art)
Ms. Pip (Sharon) Brant (painting/fabric + textiles)
Mr. William (Bill) Burke (ceramics/installation)
Mr. Eduardo Del Valle (photography)

Ms. Mirta Gomez Del Valle (photography)
Mr. Jacek J. Kolasinski (conceptual art; collaborations; new media/video)
Mr. Michael Namkung (drawing, performance)
Dr. Alpesh Kantilal Patel (contemporary art history, critical theory, curatorial practice)
Mr. Benjamin Zellmer Bellas

Tutorial courses include the following: Drawing (5390C), Figure Drawing (5391C), Printmaking (5408C), Painting (5580C), Sculpture (5740C), Figure Sculpture (5792C), Photography (PGY 5425C), Color Photography (PGY 5530C), and ART Directed Study 5907 (for Curatorial Practice). Student should contact professor specializing in the medium he or she wants to explore via email; once approval is granted, forward email to Graduate Secretary who will enroll student in the appropriate independent tutorial course.

Though the exact nature of the tutorial is contingent on the faculty member involved, the following stands across-the-board: students are expected to work independently on their practice and meet with mentors throughout the semester: preferably a mix of 1-on-1 and group meetings with other grad students.

All studio students are encouraged to take one curatorial practice tutorial towards this requirement. Curatorial practice students may take one non-curatorial practice course (in painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, and photography) towards this requirement, but only if he or she has the requisite undergraduate studio training; and with permission both of course instructor *and* of graduate director.

Independent tutorials are not meant to learn new techniques as an end point. If your concepts and ideas underlying your practice demand learning new techniques—or you just want to add new skills to your repertoire—then we encourage you to do so by contacting the appropriate professor specializing in the medium of interest and <u>auditing</u> a relevant undergraduate course. Material produced for such a course cannot be put forth for reviews and these courses do not receive graduate credit. For those curatorial practice students with no or little experience in studio arts, you are encouraged to arrange to audit an undergraduate course.

2. Graduate Seminar (on rotating topics)

While the studio tutorials are independently driven, graduate seminars reflect our belief that creating a community is just as vital to artistic and curatorial practice. During fall of student's first year, he or she will sign up for Graduate Seminar I with all other first-years. After this, graduate seminars will generally include students from all years; sometimes these courses will be a mixture of studio and curatorial practice students and other times students will be separated by track. In the recent past, seminars have focused on producing exhibitions of students' work at venues around Miami such as Dimensions Variable (spring 2014); assisting on installations at the Rubell Collection (fall 2013); and working in groups to pitch proposals to be part of Vizcaya Museum and

Garden's Basel exhibition (fall 2014). Other seminars have focused on regular attendance at lectures by and one-on-one critiques with guest critics and artists (spring 2015). Overall, the graduate seminars function as a foil for the more independent and often solitary nature of making one's work.

3. Art History

Although only 12 credits of art history are required for graduation (ARH 5796 and 9 other credits in ARH as noted in the next section), it is strongly suggested that both studio practice and curatorial practice track candidates take 18 ARH credits, or one ARH course/term on average. Taking an art history course every term (whether contemporary or Renaissance art) will provide students exposure to a broad variety of artworks and artists that is indispensable in terms of being able to situate one's practice in the history of art. On a more practical note, one must have at least 18 credits in the subject one wants to teach to be eligible to teach it in the state of Florida's university system (SUS). By completing 18 credits in art history, students will be eligible to teach art history as well as studio courses at any school in the SUS. This can be an advantage when applying for studio jobs.

BREAKDOWN OF COURSES

Consistent with the College Art Association standards for the MFA degree in Visual Arts, the FIU program will require 60 semester credits of coursework at the graduate level to be distributed as follows:

- Independent Studio Tutorial: 18 credits *(one 3 credit course each term)*
  For studio track, this is fulfilled by: ART 5390C Drawing, ART 5391C Figure Drawing, ART 5408C Printmaking, ART 5580C Painting, ART 5740C Sculpture, ART 5792C Figure Sculpture, PGY 5530C Color Photography, and PGY 5425C Photography.
  For curatorial practice track, special seminars will be arranged that meet semi-regularly.
- ARH 5805 Critical Studies in the Visual Arts: 3 credits *(typically taken in semester 1)*
- ART 5939C Graduate Art Seminar I: 3 credits *(typically taken in semester 1)*
- ART 6939 Graduate Art Seminar II: 3 credits *(typically taken in semester 2)*
- ART 5938 Studio Art Pedagogy: 1 credit *(typically taken in year 1 or 2)*
- ART 5XXX Studio Electives: 12 credits
  6 credits will be *fulfilled* by graduate seminars (most likely ART 5907 Directed Study) taken in semesters 3 and 4
- ART 5907 Directed study: 3 credits *(taken in semester before expected graduation)*
- ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus/Exhibition Preparation: 3 credits *(final semester)*
- ARH 5XXX Art History: 9 credits
  6 credits will be *fulfilled* by ARH 5482 Contemporary Art (*in year 1)* and ARH 5897 Special Topics in Art History: Post 1985 Art (*in year 1 or* 2)
- Elective: 3 credits

The above will yield 58 credits. Students will need *2 more credits to graduate*. It is recommended students enroll in a 3 credit ARH 5XXX course (see point 3 above for explanation) for a total of 61 credits.

Suggested distribution of courses (over 3 years)

	Yr 1 Fall	**Spring**	**Yr 2 Fall**	**Spring**	**Yr 3 Fall**	**Spring**	**Total Credits**
Independent tutorials (studio)/ Group seminars (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	Tutorial (studio) or Seminar (curatorial)	**18**
Art history	Critical Theory	Art history (contemporary art)	Art history (post-1985)	Art history	Elective: Art history	Suggested: Art History	**18**
Group seminars	Grad Seminar 1	Grad Seminar 2	Studio elective (Grad Seminar)	Studio elective (Grad Seminar)	Directed Research (thesis prep.)	Prospectus (exhibition/ final paper)	**18**
Misc.		Studio elective	Studio elective	Pedagogy (1 credit)			**7**
Total credits	**9**	**12**	**12**	**10**	**9**	**9**	**61**

NOTES ON PEDAGOGY

Studio

Each graduate faculty member will have a 1-credit pedagogy course under his or her name. Although each faculty member will have a different approach to this course that is specific to his or her medium, graduate students are not expected to attend every undergraduate course he or she is observing. More specifically, each graduate student under the supervision of a faculty member is expected to:

--construct, deliver, and assess ONE assignment for students;
--lead ONE critique of undergraduate work;
--develop a syllabus (for job applications);
--research and develop a teaching philosophy (also for job applications); and
--learn how to operate and maintain any equipment related to the medium.

Curatorial

Curatorial practice students will fulfill their 1-credit pedagogy course requirement by assisting on Prof. Alpesh Kantilal Patel's introductory contemporary art history. Students will be asked to:

--attend all classes;
--grade assignments as requested;

--design and deliver ONE lecture;
--create syllabus;
--lead discussion sections of undergraduate students; and
--become proficient with PowerPoint and using audio/video in presentations.

FIRST YEAR REVIEW/FORMATION OF GRADUATION COMMITTEES

A. Studio Track

At the end of semester 2, student will orally present his/her trajectory in the program and what his or her plans for the remainder of the program are to the full faculty. *Based on this and a short question-and-answer period, faculty will determine whether or not student will continue in the MFA program.*

Also at the end of semester 2, all studio track candidates should approach three graduate faculty members to serve as part of their graduate committees. In addition to those graduate faculty listed under "independent studio tutorial" section, the following professors (art historians) may also be approached: Dr. Carol Damian (gender, Spanish art, museum studies) and Dr. Lidu Yi (East Asian art). After students have selected and received permission from three faculty members to be on their committees, they may request one additional faculty member to be an *unofficial* part of his or her committee with the approval of the graduate director. Overall, Graduate Director must approve all committee appointments and has the right to make alterations, as he or she feels is necessary.

Once committees are formed, they shepherd student through the remainder of the program. During the semester, student should meet with individual faculty members of the committee at least once a month. It is expected that the entire committee meet at the beginning of each term to monitor progress; committees will report back to graduate director with any major concerns. Graduate director will meet with students in the latter case.

B. Curatorial Practice Track:

As of fall 2016, the graduate director and chair of department will serve as members of each student graduate committee.

FINAL YEAR REQUIREMENTS (BOTH TRACKS): EXHIBITION, ORAL CRITIQUE, AND FINAL PAPER

1. Exhibition

In addition to the triad of courses (independent studio, graduate seminar, and art history) to be taken each term, during the final year student should take ART 5907 Directed study (effectively, the graduate seminar in the fall to prepare student for thesis exhibition) and ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus and Exhibition Preparation (spring). These courses are tied to the student's final exhibition and written thesis.

2. Oral Critique

A final oral critique of the candidate's work will take place during the candidate's final semester. The purpose of this critique is for the candidate to demonstrate to the faculty his/her ability to describe the work exhibited, justify the use of formal strategies in connection to the overall theme, and contextualize the artwork exhibited/curatorial strategy in the contemporary art world. Student must pass critique to receive degree.

3. Final Paper

Graduate Director will discuss expected length and content with students.

TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION

Student should complete the degree in three academic years; those who are part-time must complete the degree in no more than five academic years but preferably earlier**.**

It is possible to graduate in two academic years if student takes courses during the summers, but such a plan would need to be approved by the director to ensure student will be ready to present their final exhibition.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

To remain in good standing, student must maintain a graduate GPA of 3.0. Only courses taken as part of the graduate program will be counted in the GPA. Undergraduate prerequisites taken after the bachelor's degree will not count toward the graduate GPA. While student can receive credit for a passing grade in an elective course, a grade of B- or lower in a non-elective course cannot count toward graduation.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

An incomplete grade is a temporary symbol given at the discretion of the instructor for work not completed because of a serious interruption not caused by the student's own negligence. An incomplete must be made up within two semesters or it will automatically default to the grade the student earned in the course. There is no extension of the two-semester deadline. To complete the course, the student must consult with the instructor. The student must not register again for the course.

REPEAT COURSES AND FORGIVENESS POLICY

Graduate student must follow procedures described in the University catalog to utilize the forgiveness policy. A student may repeat no more than two courses with none of the courses being repeated more than once. Only the grade and credit received on the

second attempt shall be used in computing the graduate GPA; however, the original grade will remain posted on the student's permanent record.

COURSES TAKEN AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS AFTER ADMISSION

Following admission to the University, admitted students may take a maximum of 6 credit hours at other institutions. Courses taken within the SUS or affiliated programs may exceed this limit, provided the student has the prior approval of the program director and the academic dean.

TRANSFER OF CREDITS TAKEN PRIOR TO ADMISSION

Graduate Director must approve any graduate work taken elsewhere prior to admission. Normally, no more than 6 credit hours of coursework excluding thesis credit will be accepted toward the completion of the MFA degree requirements. Supporting documentation is required. Only course work completed within the last six years can be transferred. The minimum grade for transfer credit is a "B" or better. Undergraduate course work of any kind cannot be applied to a graduate degree.

TRANSFER OF CREDIT EARNED AS A NON-DEGREE-SEEKING STUDENT PRIOR TO ADMISSION

Student seeking admission to the program may enroll prior to completing the requirements for admission as a non-degree-seeking student with permission of the graduate director and the chair of the department. *Please note that enrollment as a non-degree seeking student does not imply a right to future admission as a regular degree-seeking student.* A maximum of 12 graduate level credits earned at FIU as a non-degree-seeking student may be counted towards a graduate degree provided these were earned within the six years preceding admission to the degree program.

ACTIVE STATUS

Active status entitles student to utilize the University's resources. Masters programs require a minimum of one (1) credit hour per semester to maintain active status in the program. Lapses in enrollment for three or more consecutive semesters require that the student apply for readmission subject to the admission procedures, criteria, and policies in effect at the time the re-application is made.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student who finds it necessary to be excused from registration in the graduate program for three or more consecutive semesters must formally request a leave of absence from the graduate program. The program director and the academic dean must approve leave time. Leave will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. When a student returns from a leave of absence, the student's advisor and/or research committee will mutually agree upon decisions concerning previous or current program of studies. Applications for a Leave of Absence are available in the Office of Graduate Studies.

ACADEMIC WARNING, PROBATION, and DISMISSAL

Conditions for incurring academic warning, probation or dismissal for failure to maintain an acceptable GPA (3.0 or better) and procedures for appealing dismissal are specified in the University catalog.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS/TUITION WAIVERS

The Dean's Office normally notifies the department in the summer how many (if any at all) assistantships and tuition waivers we can offer in a given year. They are given out on merit and at the discretion of the Chair in consultation with the Graduate Director. Student on assistantship is not allowed to hold any other forms of employment. There are two types of assistantships:

a teaching assistant, who must be fully admitted to a graduate program and be registered full-time. A teaching assistant works under the supervision of a faculty member for one of his or her courses;

and a graduate teaching assistant, who must have earned a minimum of 30 graduate credit hours and be registered full-time. A graduate teaching assistant performs teaching duties for studio courses under the supervision of a faculty member.