Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts:
Studio and Curatorial Practice

Graduate Student Handbook

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

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Handbook disclaimer: A + AH reserves the right, acting within policies and procedures of FIU, 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. At the bottom right-hand corner of this (and every page) is the date upon which the most recent amendments were made.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Department of Art and Art History at Florida International University offers a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) degree in Visual Arts. Beginning in 2014, there will be two tracks offered: *studio* and *curatorial practice*. Given there is a blurring among once fairly fixed categories such as curator, critic, artist, and even arts administrator, both tracks will be closely intertwined.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES FOR BOTH TRACKS

Students 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 scores from Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) for international students whose native language is not English (score must be at least 550).

In addition, studio track applicants should provide an artist statement (no more than 250 words) and upload it and slides of 20 artworks onto slideroom.com (there is a separate nominal fee from the application for this). Curatorial practice track applicants should provide a statement of interest (no more than 250 words) and writing sample (no more than 20 pages).

For the studio track, both BFA and BA students will be considered for admission, as will applicants whose first degree is outside of the visual arts discipline; for curatorial practice students should have a BA in art history or related field. Portfolio review and an artist statement are the primary means through which studio track applicants are admitted; whereas the writing sample 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. We typically welcome a cohort of seven to eight studio track students each fall. Those who submit their applications with all supporting documents by February 1st will get priority for consideration for admission.

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

FALL/SPRING ENTRY POLICY
We accept students to begin in the fall; 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 graduate credits for each Fall and Spring semester. *Recipients of stipends from the University must be full-time students.* The number of hours 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 completed in no more than five years.

DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR BOTH TRACKS

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

- Independent Studio Tutorial: 18 credits in area of concentration
  Fulfilled by ART 5390C Drawing, ART 5391C Figure Drawing, ART 5408C Printmaking, ART 5580C Painting, ART 5740C Sculpture, ART 5792C Figure Sculpture, ART5XXX Curatorial Practice (pending approval), PGY 5530C Color Photography, and PGY 5425C Photography
- ARH 5796 Critical Studies in the Visual Arts: 3 credits
- ART 5939C Graduate Art Seminar I: 3 credits
- ART 5907 Directed study: 3 credits
- ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus and Exhibition Preparation: 3 credits
- ART (XXXX) Studio Electives: 17 credits (will end up with 18 credits)
  Fulfilled by ART 6939 Graduate Seminar II (repeatable): 15 credits +
  ART 5938 Studio Art Pedagogy: 3 credits
- ARH (5XXX) Art History: 9 credits (12 credits recommended—see #3 on next pg)
  Fulfilled by ARH (5XXX) Art History: 9 credits (12 credits recommended)
- Electives: 3 credit
  Fulfilled by ARH5482 Contemporary Art (suggested)

Total Credits: 63 credits (60 credits required)

NOTES ON GENERAL COURSE STRUCTURE/TERM

Students should take an independent studio tutorial, graduate seminar, and art history course ever term. In addition to these, during the first semester students should take ART 5938C Studio Art Pedagogy (3 credits); and during the final year ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus and Exhibition Preparation (3 credits) in the fall and Art 5907 Directed study (3 credits) in the spring. Notes on triad of courses:

1. Independent Studio Tutorial

Though FIU's MFA program is a "post-medium" program--we encourage students to work in a wide-range of materials as appropriate to best express their conceptual ideas--you will need to sign up for a tutorial with an instructor who is tied to a specific medium (sculpture, photography, printmaking, painting [and pending UGS approval, curatorial practice]) as a point of departure at the very least. Choose the appropriate studio tutorial course number from the following: 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.

You should meet with your instructor and agree upon a planned course of study—this could include everything from taking part in an introductory photography course (with the permission of instructor) to learn new skills even though you might be a "painter" to discussing specific books or articles relevant to your work. Overall, this course is an independently driven one, which should meet your specific needs. You should actively seek out faculty to help you achieve your aims. *Please be in touch with the graduate director if you need help constructing a viable plan.*

2. Graduate Seminar I and II (repeatable)

While the studio tutorials are more independently driven, graduate seminars reflect our belief that creating a community is vital to artistic and curatorial practice, too. During fall of your first semester, you will sign up for Graduate Seminar I with all other first-year students. In subsequent semesters, you will sign up for Graduate Seminar (II), which is a repeatable course and includes graduate students from all years. Different faculty members will teach each term so that students can get a variety of approaches to artistic and curatorial practice. It is expected that students explore issues in their individual practices in this course.

3. Art History

Although only 12 credits of art history are required for graduation (ARH 5796 and 9 other credits in ARH as noted above), we urge everyone to take 18 credits, which amounts to 1 ARH course per term. There are two reasons for this: 1) taking an art history course every term (whether contemporary or Renaissance art) will expose you to artworks and artists, which can be both inspirational and indispensible in terms of being able to situate one's practice in the history of art; and 2) a more practical reason is that the state of Florida requires you have 18 credits in art history at a graduate level to teach an art history course. Being able to teach art history course in addition to studio courses gives you more options.

FIRST YEAR REVIEW

At the end of the first year and in no case after the completion of thirty hours, the candidate must submit his/her work to be examined and evaluated to determine the student's progress and capability for continued enrollment in the MFA program. The review will focus on issues such as the growth of the student's work, the consistency of production at the graduate level, and the demonstrated ability to fulfill the expectations of a graduate degree. All of the student's work completed by this time will be assembled and reviewed; student will be questioned about specific issues related to his/her work.

Upon successful completion of this examination, students approach three faculty members to serve as part of their graduate committees; graduate director can help facilitate. Once committees are formed, they shepherd students through the remainder of the program. During the semester, students 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.

FINAL YEAR REQUIREMENTS: EXHIBITION, ORAL CRITIQUE, AND FINAL PAPER

1. Exhibition

As noted above, in addition to the triad of courses (independent studio, graduate seminar, and art history) to be taken each term, during the final year students should take ART 6971 Graduate Prospectus and Exhibition Preparation (3 credits) in the fall and ART 5907 Directed study (3 credits) in the spring. These courses are both tied to the student's final exhibition, which takes place in spring of the final paper. In the fall, students meet with the faculty member in charge of their course to begin to map out their exhibition in the spring. In the spring, this same faculty member will coordinate the exhibition with the students. The exhibition of student's work will take place at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Museum on the main campus in the spring.

2. Oral Critique

A final oral critique of the candidate's work will take place during the candidate's final exhibition. 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 or curatorial work exhibited in the contemporary art world.

3. Final Paper

In year one, students will be introduced to the history of art history to get a better sense of how art has been consumed in the Western art world since the late 1700s. In year two, they will participate in workshops to theorize their work and situate their artistic practice within the contemporary art world. In the final year, students will work in the fall on their papers; these will be fine tuned in the spring.

TIME TO DEGREE COMPLETION

Students should complete the degree in three academic years; those approved as part-time students should complete the degree in no more than five academic years but preferably earlier.

It is possible to graduate in two academic years if students take 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, students 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. Core courses with a grade of B- or lower will not count toward fulfillment of the core course requirement.

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 students 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 course work 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

Students seeking admission to the program may enroll prior to completing the requirements for admission as non-degree-seeking students. 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 students 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 reapplication 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.

FINANCIAL AID

The Department is able to provide financial assistance for a limited number of students accepted into the graduate program. A number of assistantships and tuition waivers are made available on a semester-by-semester basis, and are supported via university funds or grants. Openings will be made known each semester. Students on assistantships are therefore not allowed to hold any other forms of employment; the purpose of financial aid is to allow students to dedicate a larger portion of their time to studies.

GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

There are two levels of teaching assistantships:

Teaching Assistant: a Teaching Assistant 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.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: A Graduate Teaching Assistant 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.

All students intending to apply for an assistantship or for tuition waivers/stipends must complete and keep on file a Financial Aid Form (FAF) available from the Financial Aid Office. This form must be updated every year that the student seeks financial aid and must be filed by March 5th each year. Students should notify the Department if they are interested in financial aid each year.